



*Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond*  
**January 30 – February 6, 2014**

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# Aboriginal Arts & Culture

## Bringing Aboriginal culture to the masses

[Jodi Schellenberg](#)

Published on February 05, 2015



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Jason Chamakese plays students gathered at the John M. Cuelnaere Library a traditional song on the flute as part of the library's ongoing Aboriginal Storytelling Month presentations on Thursday afternoon.

Herald photo by Jodi Schellenberg

Aboriginal people from across Saskatchewan are sharing their culture this week.

Robert Gladue of Waterhen Lake First Nation and Jason Chamakese of Pelican Lake First Nation were in Prince Albert on Thursday afternoon to teach students about their culture during Aboriginal Storytelling Month.

“We are going to be doing some storytelling and we are going to be infusing some old songs and some contemporary round dance songs and a bit of flute as well as trying to pass a good message down to these young children,” Gladue said.

Gladue started the presentation by playing a round dance song and the drum and singing for the students gathered at the library.

“Mine is mostly on the musical side,” he laughed. “As for storytelling, that is more of Jay’s thing. I’m here to provide the entertainment and kind of back him up. I’m here for the looks.”

Although Gladue downplayed his role in the presentation, Chamakese said they both are important to teach children about First Nations culture.

“He does play a very vital role in what we do in what he sings,” Chamakese said. “We’re able to pass on really good messages in the songs we perform. He sings a couple songs that carry these messages.”

Chamakese is a Native American flute player, who has been playing for almost 17 years.

“I do what I can to promote mutual respect and understanding,” he said. “The music that we use is just a powerful vehicle that helps us pass that message on and that is ultimately what we are here for.”

Both believe having an Aboriginal Storytelling Month in the libraries across the province is important.

“It is important because it is put on by the library systems and they are inviting resource people from all over the province to come in and share in school and libraries and different venues throughout the province,” Chamakese said. “I think anytime where you have an opportunity to bring in people and to share and take steps forward to what I was talking about -- that mutual respect and understanding -- and it all begins with learning about one another.

“That’s essential and that’s key is that we are taking these opportunities to teach and we are also taking these opportunities to learn.”

As a First Nations person, Chamakese said they don’t have a storytelling month because “it is just a way of life, it is who we are.”

“We don’t really compartmentalize into one month,” he said. “It is an ongoing thing and it is a lifelong thing. To have something like this is always a step in the right direction.”

Being invited to share their culture with students in Prince Albert is one way to open the doors of communication, the men said.

“I think the dialogue we are sharing is really important as far as our work goes -- I think especially talking about young First Nations youth,” Gladue said. “It is really important to show them a bit of their background, culture and language and maybe inspire them to pursue or try to learn more about who they are because it gives them a strong culture foundation.”

“If it can inspire young people to wanting to know more about people from other cultures and if it can inspire our own young people towards wanting to learn more of the language, learn more of our traditions, then that is how I see as being successful,” Chamakese said. “We are not here to try to force anybody into anything. We just want to help inspire and empower young people into making good decisions and good choices.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.paherald.sk.ca/News/Local/2015-02-05/article-4033758/Bringing-Aboriginal-culture-to-the-masses/1>

## **National Indian Leg Wrestling League takes to Winnipeg ring**

**Terrance Houle (The Blackfooter) takes on Peter Morin (The Bannock Bruiser) in main event at Urban Shaman**

By Jillian Taylor, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 06, 2015 3:00 PM CT Last Updated: Feb 06, 2015 6:01 PM CT

For one night only The Blackfooter is taking on The Bannock Bruiser at the Urban Shaman Contemporary Aboriginal Art Gallery in Winnipeg.

The National Indian Leg Wrestling League of North American is the latest exhibit at the gallery in the Exchange District.

Terrance Houle, a.k.a. The Blackfooter, is the artist behind the league.



"When you come into the show you get to see these amazing native artists because all of the participants are native artists," said Houle. "They are all strong, so you get to see strong people and these strong warriors in a sense."

There are 10 wrestlers in the league. Each of their personas pokes fun at stereotypes of aboriginal people.

One wrestler is called Sugar and his "final move" is diabetes.

"These are things aboriginal people wrestle with: sugar, white flour and diabetes," said Houle.

Houle said most of his work focuses on stereotypes placed on aboriginal people by non-aboriginal people.

He said if aboriginal people don't talk about the stereotypes, then they become hurtful.

"If you use them, then you can dispel them and you can break them down and recreate," said Houle.

Houle said the leg wrestling league was inspired by watching wrestling when he was a kid. He said he also did a lot of leg wrestling.

"Always had to leg wrestle because I was always the only native person where ever I was, so everyone always wanted to wrestle the native kid," said Houle.

The competition starts at 9:00 p.m. The warm up matches feature four local leg wrestlers before The Blackfooter and Bannock Bruiser step into the ring.

The show is open to the public and audience participation is encouraged.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/national-indian-leg-wrestling-league-takes-to-winnipeg-ring-1.2948341>

# Aboriginal storytelling tradition lives on in Saskatchewan

By Carly Dionne Robinson Global News  
February 10, 2015 6:56 am



SASKATOON – It’s a custom used to teach, entertain and remember. Traditional aboriginal stories vary from region to region but they all fall back to the same seven fundamental teachings: love, courage, respect, honesty, humility, truth and wisdom.

“Storytelling is an essential part of who we are as a people,” said Chad Solomon, who uses graphic novels and puppets to tell his story in a series called *Rabbit and Bear Paws*.

“If we understand our own stories of where we come from, then we can hopefully be better people to be better neighbours with everyone else around us.”

Solomon’s stories are all based on traditional teachings; however, he finds ways to connect with contemporary issues such as residential schools, or missing and murdered aboriginal women, in a lighthearted way suitable for children.

“Every part of life is art, art is a story.”

While Solomon’s modern touch to storytelling is puppets, Lindsay Knight uses a beat to tell her story. Known as “Eekwol” on stage, the award-winning hip-hop performing artist grew up knowing very little about her own history.

It was only in high school when a teacher told her to close her textbook and talk openly about the colonialism and the effects it has for modern aboriginals that Knight was inspired to take to music. She now raps her messages about the different worldview lived by aboriginal people pre-colonialism and the importance of keeping traditional languages alive.

Megan Parsons says that hearing from Eekwol at Saskatchewan Polytechnic campus as part of aboriginal storytelling month was something inspirational.

“It’s nice to see people embracing their culture, and caring about the loss of the languages,” said Parsons.

Both Eekwol and Solomon spoke to crowds Monday in Saskatoon as part of aboriginal storytelling month.

**Direct Link:** <http://globalnews.ca/news/1821009/aboriginal-storytelling-tradition-lives-on-in-saskatchewan/>

## Spence duo shining spotlight on Métis culture

By: Jared Story

Posted: 12:06 PM |



Ryan and Clarissa Spence perform traditional Métis song and dance numbers together.

A Garden Grove brother and sister duo is keeping Métis music and dance alive.

Métis siblings Ryan and Clarissa Spence, 11 and 9 respectively, will perform on Fri., Feb. 13 at 9:15 a.m. at Garden Grove School. On Tues., Feb. 17 the Spences will perform at École Stanley Knowles School, which they both attend.

Ryan, a fiddler, plays traditional Métis numbers like the Red River Jig and Cat Scratch Reel, while Clarissa dances to his music.

"About six years ago my grandfather started teaching me," said Ryan, a Grade 6 student. "I had a small tiny fiddle at first and then I started to get formal training from a person named Mark Morisseau about half a year ago.

"It's just like any other instrument. It's amazing, it's fun, it's the best."

In the last year, the Spences have played gigs at Riel House, Asham Stomperfest, the Metis Child, Family and Community Services annual Caregiver Appreciation Dinner, as well as regular busking outings at The Forks. The duo plans to perform in The Forks Market on Louis Riel Day.

Ryan said performing in front of people was a bit daunting at first, but that he and his sister have since got the hang of it.

"I overcame my stage fright and now we're just carrying on the Métis heritage, being ourselves and making sure people know about Métis culture," Ryan said.

Darryl Spence, Ryan and Clarissa's dad, said he and his wife Karen are pleased that their children have chosen to embrace their Métis lineage.

"I think it's just about picking up the culture, being proud of their Métis heritage, and enjoying using their talents, because they're both really talented and they enjoy it. We want to foster and that make sure they have every opportunity," Darryl said.

In addition to celebrating their culture, busking at The Forks is a great way to make a little scratch.

"So much money," said Clarissa, who is in Grade 4.

"Enough to pay the bills," Ryan added.

Ryan said the duo is excited about performing the Louis Riel Reel on Louis Riel Day, a song he said was a tough one to master.

"It's a fast-paced song. It's really hard to play," Ryan said. "Once you learn a new song or a new step it's just the greatest feeling in the world. You'll say 'Oh, I can't do it' and within a few weeks you can play it perfectly or jig it perfectly."

Ryan, who also plays hockey, and Clarissa, who takes taekwondo, said they're both fully committed to their craft.

"Forever, never stop. We always say Spences never give up," Clarissa said. Check out Ryan and Clarissa's YouTube channel at <http://ryanspence.ca>

**Direct Link:** <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/our-communities/times/Spence-duo-shining-spotlight-on-Metis-culture-291414861.html>



## **K.A.S.P. blends First Nations storytelling and hip hop**

### ***Talking Stick Festival: First Nations rapper helps keep traditions alive while espousing positive personal empowerment***

By Stuart Derdeyn, The Province February 11, 2015



Rapper K.A.S.P. is well known for his collaborations with DMC of the legendary RUN DMC, Moka Only, Chino XL and Canadian icon Choclair.

Rob Sawan knows struggle and the street intimately. Now he's devoted his life to telling the stories from there to heal First Nations communities.

The Penticton-based Cree rapper who records under the moniker [K.A.S.P.](#) worked his way up from a rough East Van youth rife with alcohol and drug abuse to become a motivational speaker. Through both music and oral narrative, he tackles topics such as learning legal rights, addictions and cyber-safety alongside finding your inner warrior, sharing life stories and building a better future.

K.A.S.P. appears back in his old neighbourhood at the Full Circle produced [Talking Stick Festival](#) at the Our Generation — Honouring Our Voices and Stories event with DJ Kookum, Os12, Enter-Tribal, Niska Napoleon, Manik1derful and others with host Suzette Amaya (York Theatre @ The Cultch, February 26, 8 p.m.). He thinks it's a perfect event to appear at.

“My name stands for Keeping Alive Stories for the People, because that is what native people have been doing for ages and continuously adapting that storytelling traditions into rock, country, hip hop,” says K.A.S.P. “Ultimately, it's about using music as a way

to tell my story but also to preserve my cultural traditions. I've been blessed along the way performing with Run DMC, Chino XL, Choclair, Moka Only, have a track coming with Madchild — it's been amazing.”

His album *LivingThaGoodLife* won the 2014 Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Award for best Hip Hop or Rap CD and its songs of personal triumph over adversity and celebration area a starting point for the rapper's community work. He wants to get native youth telling their stories to heal and progress into what he sees as their future.

“It's coming around to be our time, their time,” says the 35 year-old. “I do an annual tour called Reach Our Native Youth which is using hip hop to preserve our culture which begins with the four foundations of the genre and ties it in with nation's traditions. It's uncanny how much they are the same.”

Don't believe it? You might change your mind after his breakdown of the comparisons.

“You have breakdancing and you have traditional dancing such as powwow or whatever it may be for each nation, then you have the DJ and the hand drum, the graffiti and the native art and finally the rapping and the traditional storytelling,” he says. “When DMC and I got together through MySpace — how long ago was that? — he had the idea of putting together a track titled Kings and Chiefs referencing him being the King of Hip Hop and me being a chief, which I had to clarify to him I most certainly am not. But it remains a career high.”

Taking his formula for giving contemporary youth access to ancient traditions has worked its way into different directions such as recording with guests such as Grand Chief Stewart Phillip on his 2011 album *Muskwa* or recent projects rapping entirely in Cree with revered elders. Underlying it all is commitment to reinforcing his message that life is what you make it and it is possible to make it awesome.

“Look, I had it bad, and for a long time, but I've been clean and sober coming up on year six,” he says. “My two cousins molested me, my dad was a heroin addict who beat me up, my mom was on the street helping him out. It was rough and I didn't deal with it. Instead, I drank two 26's a day, cheated, lied, robbed people and more, and then I went to a seminar titled Choices and it changed my life and set me on this path.”

After forgiving himself for his failures, he forgave his tormentors and went forth with the positive things he learned from family and friends.

“Finding value in all situations and all things is hard but it ultimately prepared me for the work I do now,” says K.A.S.P. “And I totally, 100 per cent, think that aboriginal music blowing up is just one place where we are getting taken seriously and it's our time.”

He's excited to have mainstream media sharing the story and to be appearing at the Talking Stick festival running featuring such artists as 2014 Polaris Prize-winner Tanya Tagaq, 2015 JUNO nominee Leela Gilday and others.

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## **Talking Stick Festival**

*Where:* Various venues

*When:* Tuesday to March 1

*Tickets/info:* [talkingstickfest.ca](http://talkingstickfest.ca)

### **Direct Link:**

<http://www.theprovince.com/blends+First+Nations+storytelling/10805475/story.html>

# **Board passes motion to acquire First Nations art from area bands**

Spencer Anderson / Daily News  
February 12, 2015 12:00 AM

The Regional District of Nanaimo board has passed a motion to spend \$30,000 to acquire art from each of the three First Nations within the RDN as a token of appreciation and recognition for each community.

Howard Houle, who represents Gabriola and the surrounding islands at the RDN, proposed the motion, which passed at the RDN committee of the whole Tuesday.

The motion still has to pass at the upcoming regular board meeting on Feb. 24, but Houle said he is confident it will once again receive support.

Houle said the idea was prompted by a recent joint appearance at the inaugural RDN board meeting in December from representatives from each of the Snuneymuxw, Nanoose and Qualicum First Nations.

"We had three First Nations come to the board meeting to welcome us and wish us the best, and that's the first time all three have (done that)," he said.

Houle said the art work will be displayed in public areas of the RDN administrative offices at Hammond Bay Road.

He said the original intention was to divvy up the \$30,000 evenly three ways amongst each First Nation, but added another possibility may be to ask the three communities to work together on a common project for the regional government.

"We haven't discussed the details yet, we may ask for proposals," Houle said.

Houle said he does not have a specific idea of what type of art work the RDN is seeking.

"It's sort of wide open."

He said Wednesday the RDN has not been in contact with any of the First Nations on the idea yet.

However, if the motion receives final approval as expected, funding will be allocated for the project in the RDN's grants in aid budget for 2016.

- See more at: <http://www.nanaimodailynews.com/news/nanaimo-region/board-passes-motion-to-acquire-first-nations-art-from-area-bands-1.1760492#sthash.4CzrVwfa.dpuf>

## Aboriginal Community Development

### Isolated nation offers Canadians rare look inside

By [Craig and Marc Kielburger](#)

Friday, February 6, 2015 7:10:53 EST PM



Filmmaker Andree Cazabon with youth of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig First Nation. Photo by The Tyee.

*This is the second in a four part series on aboriginal people and issues.*

For youth of the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig First Nation community, the nearest high school is hundreds of kilometres away by plane. If you break a bone, it's another flight for treatment — the hospital's X-ray machine hasn't worked for two years.

But despite challenges, none of the residents of this remote fly-in northern Ontario community — known simply as KI — would abandon their homes and land. And they're inviting all Canadians to come on a "reconciliation visit" to live with them for a week to understand why.

As Craig prepares to defend Canadian author, Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian* on CBC's Canada Reads in March, we've been thinking about breaking barriers, which is theme of this year's book debate. One of the greatest barriers facing our aboriginal communities is most Canadians don't understand those problems. They're too far away — hidden in remote communities like KI.

Perhaps if more people could see with their own eyes, Canada might discover the will for change — as did a very high-profile circle of women this past September.

The group that went on that little-known, visit in KI included the Countess of Wessex (wife of Queen's Elizabeth's youngest son Prince Edward), Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, incoming Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Vicki Heyman, wife of the U.S. Ambassador to Canada, and Sybil Veenman, former senior vice-president of Canadian mining giant Barrick Gold.

They spent a few days in the community — and what they saw changed them.

Veenman says in her job as a mining executive, she had visited many developing communities around the world and witnessed the challenges they faced. "But to see it here in Ontario is an eye-opening experience."

Although homes in KI were an improvement over tin-roofed shacks she saw overseas, Veenman was still shocked at the overcrowding.

The visitors saw the hospital's broken X-ray machine. They heard how, without a high school, only one in 10 local youth will complete their high school diploma.

But what really struck visitors was the attitude of KI youth who, despite their community's conditions, have not given up hope for change. "I was really amazed and impressed by their enthusiasm," Veenman says.

It is the youth of KI driving the reconciliation visit initiative. They're turning their energy to getting their community its own high school.

By spending time in the community, hearing shared stories, history and traditions, the visitors came to truly understand the connection between the community and the land.

What they saw has turned these women into activists. They are sharing their experiences, and they continue to discuss what they can do.

“If I can help shine a light on these communities . . . and the potential they could have, then I do so willingly,” the countess said in North Bay.

Veenman is encouraging Canadians to take KI up on its invitation. “If more people did a reconciliation visit, they’d understand better.” (The next KI visit is July 17 to 23, and open to all Canadians, although spaces are filling up fast. Contact Andree@productionscazabon.com)

Every year, hundreds of young Canadians travel with us to visit and work in developing communities overseas. Invariably the experience — seeing with their own eyes the challenges and meeting extraordinary people — sparks a passion for positive change. If we are to tear down the barriers between Canada’s aboriginal and non-aboriginal people and address the challenges in communities like KI, we need to spark that passion here.

- *Craig and Marc Kielburger founded a platform for social change that includes Free The Children, Me to We, and the youth empowerment movement, We Day.*

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thebarrieexaminer.com/2015/02/06/isolated-nation-offers-canadians-rare-look-inside>

## **#ShutDownCanada: First Nations people plan nationwide protests Friday**

QMI AGENCY

First posted: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 04:50 PM EST | Updated: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 04:57 PM EST



A protester carries a sign down the escalator during an Idle No More round dance to stop racial profiling at City Centre Mall in Edmonton, Alta., on Saturday, Nov. 8, 2014. Respected aboriginal elder Gary Moostoos was banned from the mall last month. Oxford Properties Group later rescinded the ban and apologized to Moostoos.

Indigenous people are planning events, rallies, boycotts and blockades all across Canada on Friday in what's gearing up to be the biggest national First Nations protest since Idle More More.

It's called #ShutDownCanada, and it's described as a callout "for communities across Canada to blockade their local railway, port or highway" on Friday, Feb. 13.

"Don't buy, don't fly, no work and keep the kids home from school. A diversity of tactics is highly recommended!" the national Facebook event page, hosted by In Solidarity with all Land Defenders, reads.

The events aim to tackle a wide variety of issues -- the mass incarceration of indigenous people, major resource extraction projects on unceded indigenous lands and the more than 2,000 missing and murdered indigenous women, to name a few.

"Make no mistake that systemic racism and structural violence are connected to the needs of this illegal colonial state to maintain control of the land for exploitation. That is why we must call attention to these issues at the same time," the Facebook page reads. "It's all connected."

Toronto is planning a "peaceful & calm assembly with the purpose of raising public awareness and sharing knowledge with passersby" in Yonge and Dundas Square.

In Vancouver, there are plans to block Port Metro Vancouver locations all across the lower mainland.

Near Sarnia, Ont., Walpole Island First Nation members are planning to slow down traffic and inform passing motorists about missing and murdered indigenous women.

In Prince George, B.C., organizers are protesting at City Hall and asking supporters to put their wallets away.

"To do this we need to not buy gas, don't go shopping, in all possible cases don't go to work. Show the cronies in Ottawa that we are serious and things need to change now."

Most local event pages on Facebook have hundreds of people vowing to attend, and the national page boasts more than 6,500 participants.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/02/11/shutdowncanada-first-nations-people-plan-nationwide-protests-friday>

## **Ottawa gives \$6-million for access roads to two remote Manitoba First Nations**

WINNIPEG — The Canadian Press

Published Wednesday, Feb. 11 2015, 7:47 PM EST

Last updated Wednesday, Feb. 11 2015, 7:47 PM EST

Remote First Nations in Manitoba are getting roads and jobs.

The federal government has announced it is giving \$6 million to build access roads to the Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids First Nations.

When completed, the roads will connect the communities to Manitoba's all-season road network currently under construction on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Right now Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi are accessible only by air or winter road.

Little Grand Rapids Chief Martin Owens says the roads will improve residents' quality of life by providing jobs and also improve relations between the two communities.

The road will also open the way to the local airport, and when finished, the roads will link the communities with the Bloodvein First Nation and the all-season road.

"Our families will now be able to assist one another in all aspects of healthy living," Owens said in a news release Wednesday.

Tory MP Shelly Glover says the project will make it easier for community members to access job sites and training and will improve economic prospects.

About 36,000 residents, mostly aboriginal, live in more than 30 communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Little Grand Rapids has an on-reserve population of 1,269 and is about 268 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg.

Pauingassi First Nation has an on-reserve population of 584 and is about 280 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg and 24 kilometres north of Little Grand Rapids.

Also Wednesday, the Manitoba government announced all 2,200 kilometres of winter roads are open.

It means large trucks and other vehicles can get food, fuel, building supplies and other goods to a lot of isolated northern communities.

Manitoba Transportation Minister Ron Kostyshyn said cold temperatures and lack of snow early this winter created good conditions on many of the routes that opened earlier than normal.

"A lot of work has been done recently to maximize the short winter road season including an engineering study that has allowed an increase in load levels on most winter roads. This means supplies can be delivered more efficiently," he said in a news release.



Each year, more than 2,000 shipments of goods are trucked to a large number of isolated northern communities and the system also provides road access for area residents.

The Manitoba government has completed a panel bridge on the winter road to Garden Hill and Red Sucker Lake First Nations, Kostyshyn said, adding these structures greatly extend the short length of time these winter roads are open each season.

This is the first year the East Side Road Authority is managing the winter road system on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. This accounts for approximately half of the winter road network. The other half continues to be managed by the province.

The work to prepare the winter roads was done by more than 20 companies and created jobs for more than 100 employees. Construction and maintenance work is contracted out, primarily to local communities or First Nation joint-venture companies, which creates local employment and training opportunities, the minister said.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/ottawa-gives-6m-to-build-access-roads-to-two-remote-manitoba-first-nations/article22934306/>

## Aboriginal Crime & Justice

### Aboriginal man uses experience behind bars to help offenders tell their 'Gladue' story

[National News](#) | 09. Feb, 2015 by [APTN National News](#) |

**Kenneth Jackson**

*APTN National News*

**OTTAWA** – Dan Parlow has lived more days locked up than as a free man.

Of his 50 years, he says nearly 30 of them have been behind bars.

Before he did his first “bit” in jail he was already part of the system.

At three months old, Parlow was taken from his Aboriginal mother.

A victim of the 60s Scoop.

Abused by his “guardians” and spit out, he turned to a life of crime – guns, robberies, assaults.

He says he never had a real connection to his culture.

But that life of crime was the river and this is the sea.

Not too long after walking out of Warkworth Institution in 2013 he walked into Carleton University.

Parlow is a second-year criminology student at Carleton.

It's his last chance in life and he knows it.

"I've been told throughout my life that I was no good, I wouldn't amount to something, I was dumb. When I came to Carleton that wasn't the case. They were telling me the opposite message," said Parlow.

He's thrived in university.

Not only in getting straight A's.

But at getting the attention of his professors, including one law professor.

It was a chance encounter.

"One of my colleges was walking down the hall with Dan and she introduced me to Dan," said Jane Dickson. "We chatted briefly and he told me he'd done a couple of federal bits and he'd had some trouble. I said 'Wow. Now you're at university.'"

Parlow told Dickson being at school was the best thing that ever happened to him.

She asked him if he had a job, he didn't, but soon he would.

It turned out professor Dickson also moonlights as a Gladue writer in Ottawa.

She co-founded IndiGenius, a company dedicated to writing Gladue reports for Aboriginal offenders.

Dickson thought Parlow would be a decent fit for the company as he'd be able to connect to offenders standing in the same shoes he once wore.

It was a walk he was all too familiar with.

But as much as this story is about his past it's more about the steps he's taking now.

"When I tell them my story (to clients), I give that personal touch to it, I often find the client opens up and tell me things they wouldn't tell anyone else," said Parlow.

A Gladue report is all about their story.

It's meant to tell a judge about an offender's past.

Quite often judges learn of the trauma due to colonization passed through generations.

Colonization was a long walk in and it's going to be a long walk out.

And that history is why Gladue reports are crucial in figuring out what may have led an Aboriginal offender before the courts.

"I think with the Gladue report we're just bringing things to the surface and trying to light a fire under the justice system to show them that the issue's our people are having are there," said Mark Marsolais who founded IndiGenius with Dickson about seven months ago in Ottawa. "I mean the whole point of a Gladue is an opportunity for change and sharing with the court system that you're peeling back the layers from a charge sheet and showing them underneath what the person is about."

The phones at IndiGenius have been ringing off the hook since then.

There were no fulltime Gladue writers in Ottawa before they came along last year. In fact, the first few Gladue reports they did were done for free.

Soon after Legal Aid of Ontario started covering the costs.

Their work immediately grabbed the attention of defense lawyers and judges.

Ontario Superior Court Justice Lynn Ratushny was taken aback by a Gladue report written by IndiGenius on an Aboriginal man nabbed for bank robberies.

"It's enough to make you weep," Ratushny is quoted saying in the Ottawa Citizen back in September.

Judges in Ottawa weren't used to reading such detailed Gladue reports.

In a separate case, Justice Ann Alder made a point of asking local defense attorney Anna Brylewski to pass a message onto Dickson and Marsolais after reading a Gladue report they completed on an Aboriginal man in a separate case.

"This was one of the best Gladue reports she has ever seen. She wanted me to thank you and pass along the message that this is exactly the kind of report that judges are looking for," said Brylewski in an email to Dickson and Marsolais.

Brylewski said prior to Dickson and Marsolais defense lawyers had to rely on typical pre-sentencing reports (PSR) but they don't get too deep into an Aboriginal offenders history.

For instance, a proper Gladue report will interview the offender, but also their family and other people like social service providers.

It supposed to look at the First Nation they're from, the life they lived and effects caused by decades of oppression.

“(A PSR) is very on the surface, whereas with the Gladue report you get a real sense and real understanding of what that person’s history is ... my client even learned things about his family he didn’t know,” said Brylewski.

Marsolais is Ojibway and a member of the Whitefish First Nation Indian Band of Manitoulin Island in northern Ontario. He said when they began doing Gladue reports they never expected there would be such a demand for them in Ottawa.

“We didn’t realize it was going to explode the way it did. What turned out to be something (small) ended up being something large and we just got phone calls after phone calls for Gladue reports,” said Marsolais. “We did a presentation at (the local jail) to the inmates and it just took off from there.”

Marsolais interviews most of their clients at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre.

Like many across Canada it has a large representation of Indigenous offenders.

But outside Ottawa many offenders have a hard time getting a Gladue report written.

This despite a 1999 Supreme Court ruling, *Regina v Gladue*, stating every Aboriginal person must have one before sentencing.

Bill Sundhu, a former judge and practicing lawyer in British Columbia, said the state of Gladue reporting across the country is flawed.

“It’s highly deficient and it’s very patchy. Some provinces are a little bit ahead of others but overall it’s highly inadequate,” said Sundhu.

Sundhu said many Aboriginal people never get a Gladue report in B.C.

“Only in exceptional cases will legal aid be able to fund a Gladue report, which is about \$1,000 a report. So lawyers like myself only ever ask for them in very serious or exceptional cases. We know it’s not even worth our time,” he said. “We’re going to get rejected for them if we apply on a routine basis. So in other words, judges do not have the information that they need and should have to render a fair and just sentence.”

The Supreme Court also said judges should seek alternatives to prison sentences due to a rising population of Aboriginal offenders in prison – a number that just keeps rising.

“The Supreme Court of Canada, as far back as 1999 in Gladue, said there is a problem of over incarceration of Aboriginal persons in Canada and judges need to be aware of that and do their homework. Meaning, roll up their sleeves and reduce the over-reliance on incarceration,” said Sundhu. “That did not work. In 2012, the Supreme Court again looked at the issue and said ‘come on judges, what we said in 1999 we meant.’”

Sundhu sat on the bench in B.C. for 10 years up to 2007.

How many Gladue reports does he recall reading?

Zero.

In 2012, the issue of Gladue reporting made its way back to the Supreme Court, as Sundhu mentioned, when two Inuk men had their cases go the highest level.

“Application of the Gladue principles is required in every case involving an aboriginal offender, including the breach of a long-term-supervision order,” said the Supreme Court in its ruling. “The failure to apply the Gladue principles in any case would also result in a sentence that is not fit and is not consistent with the fundamental principle of proportionality.”

The court, again, cited the history of “colonialism displacement” and residential schools has led to lower incomes, higher levels of unemployment, substance abuse and suicide.

A year later, a federal government report found the number of Aboriginal peoples in prisons increased by nearly 50 per cent in the last 10 years, yet during the same period, the amount of Caucasian inmates dropped.

Correctional Investigator Howard Sapers found Aboriginal peoples represent a “staggering” 23 per cent of federal inmates, but make up just 4.3 per cent of the total Canadian population.

IndiGenius find too often when they speak to a client it’s the first time anyone has listened to their story.

“Almost without exception when we sit down with one of our Indigenous clients to talk to them about the Gladue process we here the same thing: ‘Nobody has ever asked me about my story or my life, nobody has ever made me feel like it mattered,’” said Dickson.

That’s where Parlow comes into play, and he knows it.

He’s seen it, and standing outside of Carleton smoking a cigarette he opens up.

“It wasn’t easy walking in this place. I felt like I didn’t belong,” he said.

But he’s making it.

It's all part of his "healing journey."

He's learning the law and said he's going to stay in school until he's teaching the same classes he is in right now.

But there is more that he wants to accomplish.

"There is an over representation of Aboriginal people in prison and it's a systematic racist system and I want to see that changed. I want to see less people in prison, more rehabilitation programs and penal punishment being the less of measures," he said.

He saw writing Gladue reports as a start.

[kjackson@aptn.ca](mailto:kjackson@aptn.ca)

**Direct Link:** <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/09/aboriginal-man-uses-experience-behind-bars-to-help-offenders-tell-their-gladue-story/>

## Wikwemikong First Nation to see more oil wells capped

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 10, 2015 10:47 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 10, 2015 10:56 AM ET



Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve Chief Duke Peltier says capping the oil wells will assure the community about the safety of its water supply. (Yvon Theriault/CBC)

In what is being considered as a big step towards protecting the drinking water for members of the Wikwemikong First Nation, the community has received funding to cap more abandoned oil wells in their watershed.

The federal government is funding work to cap five more abandoned oil wells in the community.

Two others were capped a year ago, bringing the number of wells properly remediated to seven.

Chief Duke Peltier said it's been a long time coming.



Five more abandoned oil wells on the Wikweminkong Unceded Indian Reserve on the eastern end of Manitoulin Island are being properly capped. (Supplied)

“It's a significant day here in my community, so that we can ensure, and assure, our community members that they will not have their water compromised as a result of these oil wells,” he said.

Elaine Blais, manager of the environment with Indian Oil and Gas Canada, said the other wells in the community — more than 30 — will be considered for reclamation, along with those on other First Nations in Ontario.

“At this point we will consider if there are wells in the communities that may pose any health and safety and environmental risk,” she said.

The wells were drilled between the 1860s and the 1950s without permission from the community.

Most of the companies responsible are now defunct.



Andrew "Stitch" Manitowabi is leading the work to cap the abandoned oil wells. (Yvon Theriault/Radio-Canada)

Project Manager and band member Stitch Andrew Manitowabi said abandoned oil wells are problems on fourteen First Nations in Ontario.

Manitowabi said he would like Wikwemikong to be an example of how things should be done.

“We really worked hard to make this tender our own, so we could set a precedent and lead the way in abandonment work in Ontario, not just for our community, but other First Nations,” he said.

The work in Wikwemikong is expected to take about 30 days. Capping the wells involves plugging the pipes with cement.

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*Q&A with the Indian Oil and Gas Company's Peter Tsang, manager of communications and executive services, Executive Division.*

**Q:** What is the cost of capping these wells?

**A:** This year for five wells = \$650,000

**Q:** How is it decided which wells are remediated?

**A:** IOGC worked closely with the Wikwemikong Nation, to identify the priority wells based on health and environmental considerations. Seven wells were identified by the community, based on proximity to residents and potential for environmental concern.

**Q:** What role does the Wiki community play?



**A:** As mentioned, the Nation has been instrumental in identifying the wells of greatest concern. Last year, IOGC commissioned Public Works and Government Services Canada to lead the project and deal with the two highest priority wells and this year, the Wikwemikong Nation is fully managing the project to its completion with assistance from IOGC experts.

**Q:** What is the process/procedure by which a well is re-abandoned?

**A:** An experienced oil and gas service company has been hired to lead the re-abandonment which will meet the standards of today in accordance with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources requirements.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/wikwemikong-first-nation-to-see-more-oil-wells-capped-1.2951582>

## Aboriginal Education & Youth

### The One Issue Chief Bellegarde Wants To Fix Right Now

Posted: 02/06/2015 8:42 am EST Updated: 02/06/2015 8:59 am EST

[Craig and Marc Kielburger](#), Co-Founders, Free The Children

*This is the first in a four-part series on Canada's aboriginal people and issues.*

"Canada wasn't just founded by two nations, the French and English. First Nations opened their doors to our brothers and sisters when they came across the water."

This is a pointed reminder from Perry Bellegarde, newly-elected National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, that Canada's indigenous people want to be welcomed as equal partners in the growth of this nation. They are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population, and as Bellegarde says bluntly, "it makes sense to invest in them."

Bellegarde [was elected last December](#) by chiefs from across Canada and now represents the almost one million First Nations citizens in this country. He takes over at what is arguably a historic tipping point for aboriginal issues in Canada.

Last year saw a landmark Supreme Court ruling on treaty rights, nationwide protests [over development on aboriginal lands](#), outrage over the number of missing and murdered aboriginal women in this country, and a failed attempt to create a new First Nations education system.

We recently talked to Bellegarde about the key issues he wants to address as National Chief, that include the preservation of First Nations' languages, education, treaty rights and economic prosperity.

Language is highly personal issue for this leader. He told us he didn't learn his own Cree tongue until university and that profoundly impacted his sense of identity. Knowing their own language, he argues, is essential for First Nations children because "studies have shown that when a child is fluent in their indigenous language, they're more successful in school and life."

In this vein, Bellegarde wants to fix the 43 per cent education funding gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students. First Nations communities need equitable resources not just to build schools, says Bellegarde, but to establish a system in which every First Nation community has control over its own education. Only then can these communities ensure that classroom teachings reflect their culture, history, and language. We understand the focus on this issue because in the schools we've visited, we've seen how culturally-relevant education has a positive impact on aboriginal youth.

First Nations chiefs [rejected education legislation](#) last year because it was imposed without their input, according to Bellegarde. This means that creating an education system that meets the needs of First Nations requires a new cooperation between the federal government and aboriginal people--and for the sake of youth living in First Nations communities, we hope these two parties can find ways to work together.

Bellegarde also talked to us about the need for government and all citizens to see First Nations land claims and treaty rights as opportunities to partner together, not obstacles. In June 2014, [the Supreme Court ruled](#) that federal and provincial governments must get the consent of aboriginal people before developing resources on their lands. Bellegarde also believes revenue sharing in such resources is key to creating much-needed jobs that will end poverty and despair in aboriginal communities.

"When we win, everybody wins," he explains "because there is a huge cost to the socio-economic gap that exists."

There are more issues on which we can work together. Many Canadians support the Assembly of First Nations' call for a plan of action on [missing and murdered aboriginal women](#). And we can ensure the stories of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission -- which will issue a report this June -- become part of a shared history that all Canadians learn.

Bellegarde makes an interesting point that aboriginal issues in this country are not only aboriginal issues. They are Canadian issues that concern us all.

Communities living in third world conditions, angry because they feel they've lost their cultural identity and their rights are trampled--that costs both our economy and our social

fabric. Addressing those problems will bring prosperity to our nation as a whole. That's what Bellegarde wants Canadians to realize.

"We're all in this together," he says. We agree -- and let's start working together.

Brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger founded a platform for social change that includes the international charity, Free The Children, the social enterprise, Me to We, and the youth empowerment movement, We Day.

**Direct Link:** [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/craig-and-marc-kielburger/perry-bellegarde\\_b\\_6623360.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/craig-and-marc-kielburger/perry-bellegarde_b_6623360.html)

## Music Mogul designed to teach indigenous students business skills

By Kim Wheeler, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 07, 2015 6:00 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 07, 2015 6:00 AM ET



Grade 10 student Reed Knockwood shows off the Music Mogul game on his phone. (Vaughn Merchant)

Ever dream of being a big-time music manager and taking your favourite band to the top? A new game app called *Music Mogul* gives you the chance to do just that.

It's no coincidence that the game features indigenous musicians like Juno award winners A Tribe Called Red, rapper Joey Stylez and pop singer Elisapie,

*Music Mogul* was developed for indigenous high school students by Cape Breton University as a way to learn valuable business skills.

The game allows you to tour acts across the country, building up a fan base as you go. The user has to decide on things like ticket prices, equipment rental, selling merchandise at shows, and advertising. But when you start, there are no clear instructions on exactly how to play.

“That's what it will be like for them when they graduate. There will not always be directions and everything clearly marked,” said Brian Smith.

Smith is the national general manager for the In.Business high school mentoring program for indigenous youth that offers in-class and online learning opportunities.



Music Mogul was developed for indigenous high school students by Cape Breton University, as a way to learn valuable business skills. (Revolve Branding and Marketing)

Smith says the program struggled with how much information and direction to give the user.

“We decided that to really learn, you must make a few mistakes and re-adjust your strategy then try again. Just like in the real world,” said Smith.

Independent artists like Joey Stylez are familiar with the choices the player has. Stylez has planned and implemented his own cross-country tours, sold merchandise and built a fan base.

“I feel that today’s artists are the pioneers of a new and exciting age,” said Stylez, adding that technology has changed the way the music industry is reaching out to fans.

“When I was approached about the app and heard it was also educational I was honoured to be on deck as two of my passions in life are teaching the youth and the other being music and the arts.”

Stylez’ song “Jaded Angel” featuring Kinnie Starr is part of the Music Mogul game.

The app was developed by Revolve Branding. The In.Business program is currently being established across Canada. The pilot program began in Nova Scotia at Cape Breton University.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/music-mogul-designed-to-teach-indigenous-students-business-skills-1.2944805>

## **First Nation students experience science with a twist | Video**

By Kerry Benjoe, Leader-Post February 6, 2015

REGINA — Mixing science and culture can equal a lot of fun.

Students from six First Nation schools travelled to Regina to show off what they learned at the first File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC) Science Fair.

Students set up their displays in Queensbury Convention Centre and were ready to share what they learned with those in attendance. Some of the projects were experiments like potato power, tornado in a bottle and how to create goo. While other projects had a cultural component such as how snowshoes work, uses of the teepee, music moods using powwow music and measuring soundwaves using a hand drum.

“Kids have an opportunity to come together and learn from their peers and also to have some hands-on experience,” said Lori Poitras, FHQTC director of education.

She was pleased with the turnout for the event.

The purpose of the science fair was to help promote science among First Nation students.

“Within our tribal council we have really focused on reading and numeracy, but we really need to start looking at science and bringing out that indigenous knowledge in our science area because historically that was a big part of our learning,” said Poitras. “We wanted very much to balance that in terms of the curriculum we are teaching our kids in school.”

She said evidence of First Nations science and technology can be found in stone artifacts throughout North America.

“I think that our kids need to relearn that knowledge through science,” said Poitras.

Jerry Anaquod and Zenian Cappo partnered up to deliver a demonstration on sound and sound waves using a hand drum and sand.

The Grade 7 students from the Muscowpetung Education Centre said they wanted to incorporate culture into their project.

“We thought about powwows and we wanted to something on soundwaves,” said Anaquod. “We used the drum and sand because sand comes from Mother Earth.”

As they worked on their project, they learned about how sound travels and how it moves.

Although they both prefer math, they had fun creating their project for the science fair.

Other students like Devaughn Poitras, opted to create a traditional science project by using potatoes to power a calculator.

The Grade 7 student from Payepot School said he’s always had an interest in science and knew exactly what he wanted to do for the science fair.

“I watch a lot of science shows and I wanted to see if those experiments really work,” said Poitras.

It took a few tries to get his potato battery to work, but with a little research and patience he was able to make it happen, he said.

Poitras said the best part of the science fair was learning about how energy can be transferred and sharing it with others.

Plans are underway to host a science fair next year and possibly extending an invitation to urban schools to participate.

**Direct Link:**

<http://www.leaderpost.com/life/First+Nation+students+experience+science+with+twist+Video/10794353/story.html>

## **Paul Martin: Indigenous thought belongs in the classroom**

PAUL MARTIN

Special to The Globe and Mail

Published Monday, Feb. 09 2015, 3:00 AM EST

Last updated Tuesday, Feb. 10 2015, 8:53 AM EST

*What actions could end the shocking disparity between the prosperity of Canada and the deprivation of First Nations? In our series Rich Country, Poor Nations, a range of contributors argue for one idea that could make a difference.*

*Paul Martin was prime minister of Canada from 2003-2006*

When it comes to the reality of indigenous life in Canada, no issue can be deemed the most important. But if I were to single out one action that has too long been ignored, it would be to repair the mistake that was made by colonial governments who, believing that native culture had no value, assumed its people had nothing to say.

This false assumption has contributed grievously to the wrong and repeated attempts to assimilate the First Nations, which is a root cause of so much of the poverty and missed opportunity we see today. From outlawing traditional ceremonies to the horrors of residential schools, the history of Canada is fraught with examples of a culturally genocidal dismissal of First Nations values and sense of worth, a policy of unconscionable discrimination that continues apace. For example, it can be seen in the current case before the Human Rights Tribunal on the underfunding of child welfare on-reserve, where one out of every two children already lives below the poverty line, and in the current underfunding of schools on-reserve as a result of the government's expropriation of the new education monies provided in the 2006 Kelowna Accord.

It's to be hoped that the tribunal will render its decision soon, and that it will be the right one. But what about the six-year-olds on-reserve who enter Grade 1 only to be told effectively that their education is less important than the students attending provincial schools, which receive much greater per capita funding.

Nor is this the only issue arising out of the government's most recent education bill – C33, which not only failed to provide adequate funding, but was as well oblivious to the importance of community involvement in a child's schooling. The bill would have legislated that Ottawa, which has no department of education, should nonetheless assert control over on-reserve learning, despite the fact that across the country there are outstanding First Nations educators and countless examples of structures that work. Even more baffling was the government's knee-jerk reaction when asked before Christmas by the First Nations leadership for a meeting to resolve these issues. The minister refused, stating that it was the "government's plan or no plan." At some point the government must come to its senses.

Wherein lies the answer? It lies on a dusty shelf of a shuttered library in a recommendation of the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which says, "Aboriginal children are entitled to learn and achieve in an environment that supports their development as whole individuals." It is this statement that must penetrate the conscience of the nation, for it means that we cannot ignore the need for indigenous thought and fairer funding in on-reserve schools. It also means we can no longer ignore the need for indigenous history in all of our schools.

Can indigenous thought hold its own? Of course it can. Modern science and mathematics are an essential component of indigenous learning. However, unlike Western teaching, which compartmentalizes much knowledge, the indigenous approach, which is grounded in the links between all of existence, is more holistic. Or to come at it another way:



Western thought often implies that we are above nature. Indigenous thought states that we are unequivocally a part of nature, which is one of the reasons indigenous thinkers have had trouble making themselves heard in so many debates, such as those focused on the environment.

To put it quite simply, while indigenous traditions differ from many of their Western counterparts, this is not to say that in the search for the truth we can't learn from each other - and the time to start is now! This for many reasons! But let me close with two. The first is that to deny the benefits of working together is to subvert the very openness that has advanced human knowledge thus far. Furthermore, as Canadians, it is to ignore our origins as a nation at a time when the real need is to repair the consequences of those who treated this land as *terra nullius*, or a place where nobody lived, so many hundreds of years ago.

The second reason for raising the indigenous worldview is that indigenous Canadians are the youngest and fastest-growing segment of our population. They are arriving on the doorsteps of Canadian colleges and universities in greater numbers than ever before. Thus, it is important that our institutions of higher learning recognize the argument of many indigenous scholars to the effect that indigenous thought is not a subset of Eurocentric thought, but a body of knowledge with very different origins that are every bit as rich and profound.

This is important in terms of the integrity of university teaching. But it is important for another reason as well, one to be found in an insight of the philosopher Charles Taylor, who suggested that it is non-recognition, of being invisible, of not being there in the minds of the majority that is one of the major obstacles facing those of indigenous origin. In today's Canada, no student who wants to succeed should have to leave their identity at the door when they walk into a classroom.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/indigenous-thought-belongs-in-the-classroom/article22839404/>

## **PM to AFN: education bill not moving ahead**

By Steve Rennie The Canadian Press  
February 9, 2015





Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde is shown in Ottawa after an interview on Monday, Feb. 9, 2015.

OTTAWA – The new national chief of the Assembly of First Nations says Prime Minister Stephen Harper personally told him that the Conservative government will not move ahead with its controversial overhaul of aboriginal education.

That raises a big question mark over what happens to the \$1.9 billion tied to the original bill, which has been in limbo since last spring when chiefs from across Canada flatly rejected its proposed reforms to First Nations education.

In a wide-ranging interview with The Canadian Press, Perry Bellegarde said he asked Harper on Jan. 28 not to “re-profile” the money — in other words, not to use funds set aside for First Nations education in last year’s budget for another purpose, such as paying down the deficit to balance the books in an election year.

Bellegarde said he did not leave his meeting with the prime minister with a sense of optimism about the education money.

“I can’t say yes or no. I didn’t get a warm, fuzzy feeling in terms of the request,” Bellegarde said Monday.

“So it’s a work in progress. But we’re not going to quit our efforts. We’re going to continue our lobby efforts. It’s just too important.”

Bellegarde warned of the message it would send to First Nations if the government decides to re-profile the education money.

“It would signal that they’re not in touch with communities, not in touch with the needs, and basically putting First Nations issues to the side when it comes to education, which is a travesty,” he said.

A spokesman for the prime minister was not immediately available for comment.

The Conservatives' legislation deeply divided the aboriginal community and precipitated the abrupt departure of Shawn Atleo as national chief of the AFN.

Some saw the Conservative bill as a first step — with a substantial dollar amount attached — that could improve the lives of First Nations children. Others viewed it as the government exerting too much control over aboriginal education.

The Conservatives have said the bill will remain on hold and no new money will be spent until the AFN gets behind the legislation.

It appears the AFN is unlikely to do so.

“Bill C-33 will not be going forward,” Bellegarde said. “That’s where it rests.”

So, what then?

Bellegarde is awaiting the outcome of a long First Nations battle at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to get aboriginal children in the hands of the state the same level of funding from the federal government as non-aboriginal kids get from the provinces.

If the tribunal’s decision — which Bellegarde expects “fairly soon” — on First Nations child welfare is in favour of the AFN and advocate Cindy Blackstock, the national chief said it could also boost the legal argument for more funding for education.

“You can’t do the political lobbying, if that’s not giving any teeth or any support going forward, then you look at the legal option,” he said.

“So that’s what has to happen. Then you’ve got a federal election coming up. You make things a political issue.”

The Liberals called on the Conservatives to make the money tied to the education bill available now.

“It’s time for the prime minister to stop playing politics with the futures of First Nations children by holding back essential funding for their education,” Liberal aboriginal affairs critic Carolyn Bennett said in a statement. “The additional funding for First Nations education announced last year should flow immediately.”

**Direct Link:** <http://metronews.ca/news/canada/1283503/pm-to-afn-education-bill-not-moving-ahead/>

## **Tories won’t push ahead with education plan, Stephen Harper tells First Nations**

***AFN Chief Perry Bellegarde says he asked Stephen Harper not to spend the \$1.9 billion tied to a stalled aboriginal education bill.***



Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde says he did not leave a meeting with the prime minister with a “warm, fuzzy” feeling.

Published on Mon Feb 09 2015

OTTAWA—The new national chief of the Assembly of First Nations says Prime Minister [Stephen Harper](#) personally told him that the Conservative government will not move ahead with its controversial overhaul of aboriginal education.

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**Direct Link:** <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/02/09/no-movement-on-controversial-first-nations-education-plan.html>

# First Nations education by the numbers

By: The Canadian Press

Posted: 02/9/2015 2:19 PM

OTTAWA - The new national chief of the Assembly of First Nations says Prime Minister Stephen Harper told him the Conservative government will not go ahead with its bill to reform First Nations education. That leaves \$1.9 billion tied to the original bill in limbo. Here's a look at the money attached to the bill, as well as how much the federal government has spent recently on First Nations education:

## First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act

— \$1.25 billion over three years in core funding (including language and culture), beginning in 2016-17.

— After the first three years, the amount would grow by 4.5 per cent annually.

— Another \$500 million over seven years, beginning in 2015-16, was to go toward infrastructure on reserves.

— \$160 million over four years, beginning in 2015-16, was set aside for an implementation fund.

## Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada recent education spending

— \$1.55 billion on First Nations education from kindergarten to Grade 12 spent in 2011-12.

— \$322 million on First Nation and Inuit students pursuing post-secondary education.

— About \$200 million spent on infrastructure for schools and classrooms.

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Sources: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033601/1100100033605>); First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act (<http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2014/02/07/first-nations-control-first-nations-education-act>)

**Direct Link:** <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/canada/first-nations-education-by-the-numbers-291305481.html>

# Aboriginal enrolment for Alberta post-secondary schooling on the rise

By [Jeremy Nolais](#) Metro

February 9, 2015 |



Dwight Farahat has gone back to school after years of struggling to move up the employment ladder. He's enrolled in Mount Royal University's social work program.

Dwight Farahat was a teenager living on his own with a mounting stack of bills to pay.

He tried to transfer to a high school he hoped would be a better fit but was met with questions from the principal about potential gang affiliations and past criminal dealings.

"I felt like I was set up right from the start, to be honest with you," he said. "And then I kind of just gave up."

Farahat dropped out and got a job, but it would take years before he found a true calling as a youth worker. Even then, the obstacles continued to come. While vying for one job, Farahat was told by his interviewer that she would have hired him had he met the proper educational requirements.

"This is the problem for a lot of aboriginals — you have to choose between food and shelter and school," said Farahat, who can trace his roots back to Siksika Nation.

"Just the thought of getting a university degree is way out there — it's like going to space."

Provincial data does show some signs of promise, however.

The province began tracking the number of declared aboriginals in advanced education in 2004-05 and since then the total has shot up 70 per cent to 10,610 students.

As well, aboriginals now make up about four per cent of the total student population, where they previously accounted for 2.6 per cent.

Kevin O'Connor, an assistant professor at Mount Royal University, at one point oversaw the federal government's post-secondary program for aboriginals. He said, unlike in primary school, the feds only provide partial funding for aboriginals seeking education beyond Grade 12.

"According to the federal government, they're not responsible, yet they do provide some funds," he said. "Those funds, I would suggest, are antiquated."

O'Connor said other obstacles are in play as well, including the fallout of residential school abuse and the prospects of an aboriginal living on a more rural reserve having to leave that behind and head to a big city.

Craig Loewen, press secretary to Alberta Advanced Education Minister Don Scott, said the province is taking steps to boost aboriginal post-secondary enrolment, but conceded, "We've got quite a ways to go there."

As an example, last May the ministry poured \$400,000 into the Indspire Building Bright Futures Program, an amount that was matched by the federal government. Indspire is the second-largest funding agency of indigenous post-secondary in Canada and is outdone only by the federal government's student support program.

Loewen didn't go into specifics but said, "Minister Scott is looking at a few different initiatives and a few changes to the way we do things to increase aboriginal participation and (he's) hoping to make those changes within the year."

Farahat, for his part, has enrolled in Mount Royal's social work program and is currently in his first year of study at age 31.

"Many of our parents went to residential school and never had a chance at having a proper childhood or proper schooling," he said. "They were raised in institutions. Because of the strength of the residential school survivors my generation now has the chance to pave the way for our children. It is an exciting time for our people — I cannot wait to see what the future holds for the youth."

### **Education level of aboriginal Albertans ages 25-64**

- University degree – 8.8% (compared to 27% among non-Aboriginals)
- Post-secondary certificate or diploma 39.6% (compared to 35.8%)
- Some post-secondary 7.1% (compared to 5.2%)
- High school graduate 22.2% (compared to 22.5%)
- Some high school or less 22.3% (compared to 9.5%)

— 2013 data

**Direct Link:** <http://metronews.ca/news/calgary/1283831/aboriginal-enrolment-for-alberta-post-secondary-schooling-on-the-rise/>

## **Waubageshig: Are we ready to consider boarding schools for, and by, First Nations?**

Waubageshig (Harvey McCue)

Contributed to The Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Feb. 13 2015, 9:40 AM EST

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*Waubageshig is a member of the Georgina Island First Nation in Ontario and has worked for the Cree School Board in northern Quebec, the Mi'kmaq Education Authority in Nova Scotia and Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada in Ottawa. He also helped to found the first Indigenous Studies department at Trent University, Peterborough.*

Educating indigenous youth involves enormous challenges, no less so today than 150 years ago when missionaries intent on Christianizing and civilizing tribal youths complained of their prolonged absences from mission schools because of seasonal hunting and gathering economies. While governments and educators struggle to understand why indigenous youth fail to achieve education outcomes comparable to the rest of the country despite the billion dollars that goes into First Nations education annually, scant attention is paid to a sector of indigenous youth for whom a formal education is nothing more than a mirage.

Like Tina Fontaine, the teenage girl murdered in Winnipeg, too many indigenous youth grow up in socially damaged and dysfunctional homes where hope for a better future doesn't exist. This broken system exists in many indigenous communities, not all but too many, and particularly in remote and geographically isolated regions. There, family and social violence, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, unsafe living conditions, boil water restrictions, and overcrowding are the sorry conditions that many indigenous youth from one generation to the next experience in Canada every day.

Calls for more housing for all First Nation communities, not just remote ones, have been part of the national conversation between Ottawa and First Nation leaders for more than three decades, as have requests for clean water. Little headway has been made. More money for programs to deal with family violence and drug and alcohol abuse, while useful, will not quickly resolve these difficult conditions and it's apparent that more money, especially federal money, in these areas will not materialize soon.



Relocating isolated communities to more southern sites without addressing the existing social issues is only a recipe for prolonged, and arguably even greater, misery for residents than they now experience. Unleashing a twenty-first-century version of the Peace Corps or the Company of Young Canadians to work with impoverished and dysfunctional families in isolated communities has some romantic appeal but offers little in the way of a meaningful solution.

To achieve positive and enduring changes for indigenous youth, education is the foundation. Resolving the social and material challenges that plague too many First Nation families and communities depends substantially on raising the education outcomes for indigenous youth.

The federal policy to educate indigenous youth initially in their home communities by means of the provincial curriculum and then sending them to provincial high schools off reserve isn't working. Their chronically high absenteeism rates in both on-reserve on off-reserve schools indicate they don't want to be there – even though schools on reserve offer them a temporary safe haven from the domestic overcrowding and the threat of physical and sexual abuse for at least six to seven hours daily.

Youth and children can't learn in these schools if they return daily to homes where nutritious food, potable water, love, and protection from physical and psychological harm are in short supply or non-existent. Girls are extremely vulnerable to a toxic mix of threats, fears, and outright sexual abuse. Opting for the mean streets of urban Canada or suicide, as many do, reveals what extremes they will take to escape that vulnerability. They need healthy living conditions with sound nutrition, an absence of fear, an appropriate living space, and above all, daily care and support to help them achieve.

To educate them successfully requires their removal from unsafe and dysfunctional environments and accommodating them in boarding schools where the provincial curriculum combines cultural content with literacy and numeracy. Schools where teachers and staff are trained rigorously to support and care for students.

Residential schools for indigenous youth are a sorry and tragic chapter in Canada's history. The fallout from this failed experiment still haunts us today and will likely continue to do so for some time. But the model of an indigenous boarding school where students are taught and cared for by selected teachers and staff unlike the residential schools of the past, where the curriculum focuses on academic learning that is in part defined by tribal values and traditions, where they can learn, play and mature in a safe and supportive environment – this should not be dismissed out of hand simply because of the errors and mistakes of the past. To nurture healthy and educated youth there is no substitute for a stable, safe home and community environment, but where the future offers little or no hope for either, then for the sake of the children, the other potential Tina Fontaines, this model should be considered as a potential option.

The early residential schools were horribly inept. They were created for the wrong reasons, they were administered and taught by the wrong people, and, worst of all, they

did not protect students. Today we can locate new boarding facilities in existing communities, give students the choice to return home regularly, provide an academic as well as a cultural curriculum, and staff them with rigorously screened teachers and staff.

That's just an overview. Serious consideration of the model will need to address many questions – basic ones such as: At what age would children enter the schools? How many students per school? How would the host communities be selected? Would they include a summer school? How would each school be evaluated and by whom?

The biggest obstacle this model faces is its undeniable parallels to the original residential school experiment. But we learn from the past and as painful and destructive as residential schools were, if society and governments can't support indigenous children and youth to grow up and be educated in safe, healthy, and caring environments, offering indigenous boarding schools where those environments are a core objective should be a topic of a nation-wide discussion. It should be thoughtfully and fully examined if we seek a positive and enduring response to the tragedy that Tina Fontaine represents.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/waubageshig-are-we-ready-to-consider-boarding-schools-for-and-by-first-nations/article22984326/>

## Aboriginal Health

### **First Nations children still face delays in accessing health care: report**

**Governments' response to Jordan's Principle falls short, researchers and groups say**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 10, 2015 11:40 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 10, 2015 6:16 PM CT

First Nations children in Canada still face obstacles in accessing health and social services as quickly as other children due to continuing "bureaucratic confusion" and red tape on the part of governments, according to a new report.

The report, released on Tuesday by Canadian and U.S. researchers along with the Canadian Pediatric Society, the Assembly of First Nations and Unicef Canada, says the federal government has fallen short on Jordan's Principle, its 2007 pledge to ensure First Nations children with complex health needs who are caught in jurisdictional fights between the federal, provincial and band governments are not denied access to public health services.



Jordan Anderson is seen in this 2003 image provided by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. Anderson, who was from the Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba, was born in 1999 with a complex genetic disorder that needed specialized care. He died in 2005 at the age of four. (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs)

Under Jordan's Principle, which was endorsed by the House of Commons in 2007, First Nations children are entitled to receive the public assistance they need, regardless of disputes between levels of government over who should pay.

However, the report's authors say, First Nations children needing health and social services must still contend with what it calls an "ongoing inequity," as they cannot access the care and support they need as quickly as other children in Canada.

"There is growing recognition that the governmental response to Jordan's Principle does not reflect the vision advanced by First Nations and endorsed by the House of Commons," the report states in part.

The report was prepared by researchers from McGill University, the University of Manitoba and the University of Michigan, in collaboration with representatives from the three organizations.

### ***Agreement named after Manitoba boy***

Jordan's Principle got its name from Jordan River Anderson, a young boy from the Norway House Cree Nation in northern Manitoba who was born with a complex genetic disorder that required specialized care.

After spending much of his life in a hospital setting, doctors decided he could return to Norway House, but would need an enormous amount of home care.

The Manitoba and federal governments fought over who should pay for that care. The issue was never resolved, and Jordan, 4, died in 2005 in a Winnipeg hospital, hundreds of kilometres away from his family's community.

"Responsibility for services to First Nations children is often shared by federal, provincial/territorial and First Nations governments; in contrast, funding and delivery of

these same services to most other children in Canada falls solely under provincial/territorial jurisdiction," the report says.

"Accordingly, First Nations children face unique challenges in accessing services, and Jordan's Principle is an essential mechanism for ensuring their human, constitutional, and treaty rights."

After Jordan's Principle was endorsed by the House of Commons, the federal government helped develop federal, provincial and territorial policies and procedures for identifying similar cases and dealing with jurisdictional disputes.

### ***Range of cases narrowed***

But the new report says the current federal, provincial and territorial governments' response has narrowed the range of cases to which the principle would apply, and delayed payment for services tied up in jurisdictional disputes.

"Now it's been pruned back to a definition where there is no Jordan's Principle case unless the federal government and the province agree that there is a case," said Josée Lavoie, director of the Manitoba First Nations Centre for Aboriginal Health Research and one of the researchers involved in the report.



Elizabeth Bignell reads to her seven-year-old daughter, N'Tanis George, in Winnipeg on Tuesday. The pair moved to Winnipeg last year so N'Tanis, who has caudal regression syndrome and other health issues, can get the medical care and support she needs. (Meagan Fiddler/CBC)

The governments have also excluded First Nations from the implementation of Jordan's Principle, and they lack mechanisms for ensuring transparency and accountability, according to the report.

Unicef Canada, the Canadian Pediatric Society and the Assembly of First Nations are calling on the governments to work with First Nations to "develop and implement a response for First Nations children that truly reflects the vision of Jordan's Principle."

The groups also want the governments to "systematically identify and address the jurisdictional ambiguities and underfunding that give rise to each Jordan's Principle case."

A spokesperson for federal Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Minister Bernard Valcourt told CBC News that Ottawa has reached agreements to implement Jordan's Principle with Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and New Brunswick.

"These arrangements outline commitments to developing dispute avoidance processes to ensure continuity of care for children with multiple disabilities. All other provinces already have mechanisms in place to implement Jordan's Principle," the spokesperson wrote in an email.

"While there are currently no outstanding jurisdictional disputes involving Jordan's Principle in Canada, we believe that the best way to ensure First Nation children and families get the support they need is by working with willing partners and continue engaging with provinces, territories and First Nations to collaborate on implementing Jordan's Principle."

### ***'These kids are being left out'***

Elizabeth Bignell says she and her daughter, N'Tanis George, 7, moved to Winnipeg last summer so N'Tanis could get the medical care she needs.

"I just want her to shine," Bignell said. "I want her to have every opportunity as other children do."

N'Tanis was born with caudal regression syndrome, which impairs the development of the lower half of her body. The condition has come with other medical problems for her.

Bignell said N'Tanis could not get the care she needed in their home community, the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in northern Manitoba, because their band does not receive the same federal health funding as other communities.

"A few times I was denied any kind of services only because of where she lives," she said, adding that N'Tanis needs access to specialized services not offered in their closest community, The Pas.

Cindy Blackstock, executive director of the First Nation Child & Family Caring Society of Canada, calls the results of the latest research tragic.

"We've seen internal government documents that also confirm that inside of the government, they know that these kids are being left out, and sometimes with very tragic consequences," she told CBC News.

Blackstock said her organization has a case before the Canadian Human Rights Commission asking Ottawa to broaden its criteria in Jordan's Principle cases. A ruling in that case is expected later this year.

Ontario's provincial advocate for children and youth, Irwin Elman, says he supports the new report and wants governments to take action.

"I am urging the provincial and federal governments to uphold their commitment to First Nations children and begin the hard work needed to transform existing programs and services for First Nations children and implement Jordan's Principle," Elman said in a news release.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/first-nations-children-still-face-delays-in-accessing-health-care-report-1.2951750>

## **Aboriginal Culture Room opens its doors at the Wetaskiwin Hospital**

Jerold LeBlanc/Staff writer

Wednesday, February 11, 2015 10:43:05 MST AM

It's been years in the making, so when the Aboriginal Culture Room officially opened, there was more than reason to celebrate.

The room, located on the second floor of the Wetaskiwin Hospital and Care Centre, officially opened Feb. 5.

Representatives from all four nations – Montana, Ermineskin, Louis Bull and Samson – Alberta Health Services and Wetaskiwin Mayor Bill Elliot were in attendance.

The event began with a pipe ceremony conducted by Elder Wilson Okeymaw, which was followed by a talking circle where upwards of 40 people spoke about the importance of the Aboriginal Culture Room.

"This is one of the most important days in this community, in the hospital," said Okeymaw.

"And as you can see, in the talking circle, so many people got emotional. I, myself, included.

"And it's long (time) coming to have this cultural room. It was a dream of mine when I was much younger. Now that I am close to 70, it's come to reality.

“It is for the younger generation as we go and I’m honoured for sure,” he said.

The culture room will be open 24 hours a day, through nursing staff and Aboriginal Health co-ordinator Claudette Yellowbird.

The room allows First Nations clients, families and staff to gather for meditation, smudging or other spiritual aspects.

“The cultural room, as you heard, isn’t only for First Nations people. It’s a First Nations cultural room that is open to everybody – all races of people,” said Okeymaw.

While it was, indeed, a long time coming, Okeymaw is pleased the cultural is a reality.

“It will pull two nations together for sure that are here – the non-Indian and the First Nations people.”

Tracy Lee, Aboriginal Health Lead with the Alberta Health Services’ Aboriginal Health Program, said cultural rooms are not a new concept.

The larger hospitals in Edmonton, Calgary and the United States all have cultural rooms.

“Recognizing the value of the cultural room, and how it’s proven itself invaluable in all the other sites,” said Lee. “We just knew we needed one here.”

The importance of the room is not lost on Lee.

“It proves us with a space where we can address our health in a spiritual sense as well, which is very much who we are,” she said.

“It’s also a place that acknowledges and recognizes that our kinship system is very different than mainstream.

“Our families are big. Families adopt one another in a cultural way, so families can be very huge.

“One of the reasons why we have this room is so those families won’t overflow into the hallways.

“They’ll have a space to gather and provide that support to their family to their loved ones,” said Lee.

One of the biggest supporters of First Nations people has been Mayor Elliot.

“I think that Mayor Bill Elliot has been such an inspirational bridge builder between our communities,” said Lee.

“He’s attended our truth and reconciliation gatherings ... and he’s one of the first mayors to really reach out and say, ‘We’re neighbours, let’s build a relationship.’”

This is the second cultural room to open in the Central Zone; the first open was in Red Deer in January 2014.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.wetaskiwintimes.com/2015/02/11/aboriginal-culture-room-opens-its-doors-at-the-wetaskiwin-hospital>

## Aboriginal History

### Merchant law firm launches class-action lawsuit for '60s Scoop' adoptees

#### Victim of '60s Scoop' shares his experience reuniting with Saskatchewan family

By Nichole Huck, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 09, 2015 5:00 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 10, 2015 7:18 AM CT



Tony Merchant and his law group are now representing more than 1,000 aboriginal people - with the actual files pictured - who were taken from their families and adopted into white families during the '60s Scoop'. (Aldo Columpsi/CBC)

A Saskatchewan law firm is representing more than a thousand victims of the so-called '60s Scoop' who are seeking compensation from the federal government.

The Merchant Law Group served the Federal Government the class-action lawsuit on January 30. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the government ran an Adopt Indian Métis program.

That program saw thousands of aboriginal children taken from their homes and adopted into white families in Canada and the United States.



Tony Merchant says the Adopt Indian Métis program was misguided and harmful to these children, and he alleges the children suffered physical, sexual and psychological abuse as a result of this program.

"It was part of the paternalistic approach, that if we could get children out of the hands of aboriginal people, we could give them a better life in the future by taking away their culture and turning red children into white adults," said Merchant.

Merchant alleges the children suffered physical, sexual, and psychological abuse as a result of this program. He said he has spoken with many of the children who were adopted into families in the United States who are now trying to reconnect with their cultural roots.

### ***Survivor of 60's scoop speaks out***

Wayne Snellgrove is one of the more than 1800 people who have signed onto the Adopt Indian Métis class action suit. He was born on the Fishing Lakes First Nation near Wadena and was taken from his mother while he was still a baby.

He spent four years in an orphanage before being adopted by a white family from Pennsylvania. Snellgrove says his adoptive parents tried hard, but he always felt like something was missing.



Wayne Snellgrove with his adoptive brother and mother (Photo submitted by Wayne Snellgrove)

"There was always that feeling of separation, abandonment, loneliness. I was angry without knowing what anger was. I was mourning without realizing it."

Snellgrove channelled his anger into sport. He became a two-time USA national swimming champion. He was a successful athlete, but he was never able to overcome his anger.

"My anger led to depression and depression led to several suicide attempts." Snellgrove turned to drugs and alcohol. He hit an all-time low when he was in his mid-20s when his adopted mother died of cancer. But he says it was also a turning point for him.

"The loss of two mothers in one lifetime was too much to bear."

'The loss of two mothers in one lifetime was too much to bear'- *Wayne Snellgrove*

Snellgrove hired a private investigator to help find his birth mother. At the age of 32 Snellgrove flew to Regina to meet his mother for the first time. He said the bond was immediate.

"In those first few moments my anger, loneliness and low-self worth disappeared."

Snellgrove said his mother had also struggled with more than 30 years of guilt, feeling like she should have protected him and not knowing if he was alive. During his first visit with his mother and new family, he learned his mother was a survivor of the residential school system.



Wayne Snellgrove (top left) reunited with his Saskatchewan family after 32 years. (Submitted by Wayne Snellgrove)

Snellgrove said meeting his family changed the course of his life. He has since started reconnecting with his culture, walking what he calls "the red road to freedom."

Snellgrove says he would like an apology from the Canadian government and says he signed onto the lawsuit because it may be the only justice he can get.

"It caused me a lot of pain and suffering and someone has to be accountable."

## ***Parallels to Residential School Survivors***

Merchant, who is known as the king of class-action lawsuits in Canada, also represented more than 7000 Indian Residential school survivors in a landmark case against the federal government.

The federal government approved a multi-billion-dollar settlement agreement. A chunk would go to law firms, including the Merchant Law Group, while former students received a common experience payment of, on average, \$24,000.

Merchant was recently in the news after the federal government filed a \$25-million statement of claim accusing Tony Merchant's law firm of overbilling for legal services and falsifying documents to cover it up, in a scheme to defraud Canada.

In 2005, the Regina lawyer was expecting his law firm to make roughly \$80 million for legal services on residential school claims.

Merchant was widely criticized by First Nations groups for making millions of dollars off the pain of aboriginal people. Merchant defends saying his law firm has done good by aboriginal people and will continue to do so.

"Aboriginal people have to move on. It's not easy to move on. But they are entitled over this wrong, Adopt Indian Métis, to have us try to obtain compensation for them and to try to obtain closure."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/merchant-law-firm-launches-class-action-lawsuit-for-60s-scoop-adoptees-1.2949635>

# **Aboriginal Identity & Representation**

## **First Cry ceremony takes root in Eeyou Istchee, Northern Quebec**

### **Abenaki rite of passage welcomes newborns**

By David Kawapit and Jaime Little, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 06, 2015 6:27 PM ET Last Updated: Feb 06, 2015 6:41 PM ET



Matthew Iserhoff, Legend's father, is passionate about bringing back traditional ceremonies, and learning new ones. (Mukash family)

A newborn girl, named Legend, is passed from one person to the next, each one telling her what they will do for her in their lifetime.

This is part of the First Cry ceremony, welcoming newborns to the earth in the presence of the parents' most trusted family and friends.

Danielle Mukash carries the ceremony, and Legend is her granddaughter. Danielle says it is normal that the baby cry, because she is saying goodbye to heaven for awhile.

"The First Cry ceremony has been done for thousands of years, and the reason why we do this ceremony is that a child that comes into the world is totally pure, but still connected to heaven ... We have to honour their arrival to this world," " says Mukash.

Mukash grew in Odanak, an Abenaki community on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River. That's where the First Cry ceremony was passed on to her by her grandmother, Lillian Pitawanakwat.

Residential schools and church leaders in some aboriginal communities banned traditional ceremonies, and many were forgotten over the past century. But through dreams and visions they are slowly making their way back into Cree culture, says Mukash.



Danielle Mukash holds her granddaughter Legend. In the First Cry ceremony, the newborn is passed from one person to the next, each one telling her what they will do for her in their lifetime. (Mukash Family )

"It had been forgotten for a long time. I know from experience that ceremonies come back to us when we need them, and they come from the Creator for all of us."

Mukash married a Cree man from Whapmagoostui, the northern-most Cree community on the Hudson Bay coast.

When their grandchildren were born, Danielle began to perform the First Cry ceremony and since then more and more Cree people have shown an interest in the tradition. Danielle believes the ceremony may have been practised by the Cree people in the distant past but there is no way of confirming that.

Legend's ceremony is only the third time in recent history that First Cry has been performed in the Cree communities of Northern Quebec.

Matthew Iserhoff is Legend's father and has taken part in other Cree ceremonies such as the Sundance. He's passionate about bringing back traditions, and learning new ones.

"The Cree word for child, *wash*, comes from the word *awashthahch*, or light. The child comes from a place of light, the home of the Creator, to come to theeEarth."

Like her son-in-law, Danielle Mukash works to keep the traditions alive.

"All my life, my dad would tell us stories about ceremonies", she says. "It was so close to my heart, wanting to preserve all the beautiful things the Creator gave us for thousands of years."

Danielle Mukash says she hopes that more people in Eeyou Istchee, the Cree territory in Northern Quebec, will adopt this powerful ceremony.

And she is open to performing First Cry for other families in her community.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/first-cry-ceremony-takes-root-in-eeyou-istchee-northern-quebec-1.2947036>

## **Winnipeg's racism challenge**

By: Jim Silver

Posted: 02/8/2015 11:00 AM |

The Maclean's magazine article citing Winnipeg as Canada's most racist city has prompted a public conversation that may prove to be useful. It is important that

Winnipeg's two solitudes get to know each other, at a personal and social level, and that non-aboriginal people speak to and about aboriginal people in a way that is respectful.

However, if our response to the city's racism is left at this level it won't be enough. As prevalent and as damaging as inter-personal forms of racism are, it is structural forms of racism that have produced the worst of the problem, and their solution requires more fundamental change.

Structural racism is reflected in a variety of data. Aboriginal people comprise about 15 per cent of Manitoba's population, but some 70 per cent of provincial and federal inmates. There are 10,300 children in care in Manitoba; more than 85 per cent are aboriginal. Unemployment rates for aboriginal people in Winnipeg are double those of the non-aboriginal population. The labour force participation rate for aboriginal people between the ages of 15 and 24 is extremely low at just over 50 per cent. Aboriginal adults are almost two and a half times as likely as the non-aboriginal population to have less than a high school education, and are just over half as likely to hold a university degree. The same is the case for health — aboriginal people experience a higher incidence of almost all forms of health problems, and have an average life expectancy eight years shorter and a premature mortality rate double that of the population at large. Winnipeg is the epicentre of the ongoing tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women. The incidence of poverty amongst aboriginal people in Winnipeg is about two and a half times that of the non-aboriginal population, and what is worse, 49.4 per cent, almost one-half, of aboriginal children under the age of six years in Winnipeg are living in families with poverty-level incomes. These data reflect structural racism. These problems are the product, among other factors, of racism.

Why can we say that these problems are the product of racism? Because they are all directly related to the lasting effects of colonialism — the deliberate attempts to destroy aboriginal languages and cultures and forms of spirituality, the crushing of aboriginal economic and political systems, and the damage done by residential schools, all predicated upon the racist belief that aboriginal people and their ways of life were inferior to European cultures and ways of life. Tens of thousands of aboriginal children were forcibly confined in residential schools; many were abused; thousands died of communicable diseases; all were taught to be ashamed of being aboriginal; few benefitted from the church-based European education — between 60 and 80 per cent did not even get past grade three. In most cases families were badly damaged — indeed, that was deliberate, since the goal was to break up families so as to prevent the intergenerational transmission of aboriginal cultures and languages. This, it was hoped, would "kill the Indian in the child." The trauma experienced by individuals and families as the result of these racist-inspired beliefs and practices has rippled across the generations, contributing in a disproportionate number of cases to family dysfunction, poverty, poor educational outcomes, poor health and incarceration, all of which can today be described as racialized poverty. It is the racialized poverty that produces the all-too-common "blame the victim" responses that are at the heart of this city's racism.

How can we solve these deeply-entrenched problems of racialized poverty that are now so predominant in Winnipeg? In fact, we know a great deal about how to do so. Many of the most significant efforts to solve our city's racialized poverty are led by aboriginal people. Here in Winnipeg outstanding anti-poverty work is being done by such organizations as the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad, Ka Ni Kanichihk, Urban Circle Training Centre and many more. A superb poverty reduction strategy — *The View from Here 2015: Manitobans Call for a Renewed Poverty Reduction Plan* — has just been released. It is the product of consultations across the province, and is endorsed by more than 95 organizations and endorsed, in principle, by the premier of Manitoba. Among other virtues, *The View from Here* upholds the centrality of poverty reduction efforts by community-based aboriginal organizations.

But in order to turn around Winnipeg's problem of racism — in order to get to the core of the problem of racialized poverty — we need to invest much more than we are now investing in poverty reduction strategies that have been shown to work, and we have to do so consistently over a generation or more. The problems of racialized poverty have been allowed to persist and to compound for decades, and are now so complex and multi-faceted that they are resistant to quick and uni-dimensional solutions. But they are solvable, and we know how to solve them.

The question is: are we prepared to invest significant sums, consistently over a generation or more, in anti-poverty solutions that have been proved to work well?

This is the real challenge of racism in Winnipeg.

If we have the will to meet this challenge, within a generation or two Winnipeg will be a dramatically better place to live — for all of us.

Jim Silver is chair of the University of Winnipeg's department of urban and inner-city studies, a Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Mb Research Associate, and the author of *About Canada: Poverty*, published in 2014 by Fernwood.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/Winnipegs-racism-challenge-291085091.html>

## **Aboriginal Inequality & Poverty**

### **Nahanni Fontaine: Institute equality for indigenous women**

Nahanni Fontaine

Contributed to The Globe and Mail

Published Tuesday, Feb. 10 2015, 7:14 AM EST

Last updated Tuesday, Feb. 10 2015, 8:53 AM EST

**What actions could end the shocking disparity between the prosperity of Canada and the deprivation of First Nations? In our series Rich Country, Poor Nations, a range of contributors argue for one idea that could make a difference.**

*Nahanni Fontaine is special adviser on aboriginal women's issues for the province of Manitoba. She has spoken prolifically on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls on a number of regional, national and international platforms. She was most recently recognized with the Governor-General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case (2013).*

Canadians are guaranteed "equality" under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but do we all experience it? Most indigenous women and girls would answer with a resounding "Are you kidding me?"

If we were to undertake one action in transforming the lives of indigenous women and girls across Canada, it would simply be to courageously execute and decidedly practise equality.

In the same way that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's daughter is guaranteed the right to live within an equitable space that affords her a myriad of opportunities to pursue her dreams and live a full and authentic life, indigenous women and girls must be assured the same.

Equality is not some equivocal, unattainable concept. Within an indigenous reality, its manifestation is literally the difference between life and death in the lives of indigenous women and girls every day across this country.

Indigenous women and girls have always been, and continue to be, collateral damage in Canada's story of colonization, settlement and development. Canada's narrative is born within the heart and womb of indigenous women, with little acknowledgment of the major role they played in our country's advance and the forged relationships carried out between newcomers and the First Peoples of these lands.

The lack of equality for indigenous women and girls is so clearly illustrated by epidemic levels of poverty; cultural, spiritual and physical dislocation; lack of secure housing; absence of economic opportunities; limited access to justice or reproductive health; aimed systemic racism; and the pervasive force of child and family services that women and girls confront unceasingly.



Altogether, these inequalities create the conditions from which spring the many critical issues that our people, as a whole, withstand daily – not the least, the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Equality does not only mean, “I believe you are equal with me.” It is situated within the execution of equitable policies, legislation and social development exercises that are designed to create equitable and meaningful opportunities for indigenous women and girls.

- Equality means that each First Nation child has access to education from kindergarten to Grade 12, and that respective communities are peopled with well-paid teachers and schools and homes that are free of mould and decay.
- Equality mean redirecting millions of dollars presently allocated to non-indigenous agencies to indigenous organizations to undertake that most important work of social and economic development from within an indigenous paradigm and protocol.
- Equality means legislating elected representative seats for indigenous women in regional, provincial and national legislatures, ensuring that our realities and voices are reflected in the very structures enacting policy and program change.
- Equality means that all Canadians shift their socially constructed narratives of indigenous women and girls as “sex-trade workers” or “prostitutes” or “whores” or “hookers” to those of sexually exploited women or girls. It follows, too, that equality means we must move the discourse from “john” to perpetrator. Equality means shifting the blame from exploited women and children (who “put themselves at risk”) to those who sexually exploit women and children and whom are rarely considered in the broader discussion of prostitution in Canada.

Within the totality of this inequitable space, the most savage levels of violence are perpetrated against the bodies of indigenous women and girls with utter ferocity and impunity. Indeed, one need only look to the stolen lives of Tina Fontaine, Jenilee Ballantyne, Sunshine Woods, Meagen Mancheese, Claudette Osborne, Cherisse Houle, Hillary Wilson, Jennifer McPherson, Fonessa Bruyere, Sylvia Ann Guiboche, Simone Sanderson, Amber Guiboche, Felicia Solomon Osborne, Jennifer Catcheway, Glenda Morrissette, Kelly Morrissette, Mildred Flett, Lorna Blacksmith, Carolyn Sinclair, Tanya Nepinak, Diana Rattlesnake, Vanessa Prince, Julia Hunter, Myrna Letandre, Alinda Lahteenmaki ... The list goes on.

At length, indigenous women and girls deserve an equitable Canada in which to live their most courageous, authentic and uncompromising lives. Until that is fully realized, we leave to them this shameful legacy.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/nahanni-fontaine-institute-equality-for-indigenous-women/article22887139/>

## Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

# Government to fund \$182,000 skills training project for Aboriginals

By: Staff Writer

Friday, Feb. 6, 2015 at 11:35 AM |



Brandon-Souris MP Larry Maguire announces \$182,000 in federal funding at city hall Friday morning.

The federal government will provide \$182,000 to the City of Brandon over the next two years to fund a project aimed at helping increase the participation of urban aboriginal people in the local economy.

Brandon-Souris MP Larry Maguire made the announcement at city hall on Friday morning, on behalf of Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt.

"This funding will create a working group of post-secondary institutions, Aboriginal representatives, and local businesses to develop skills and training for local aboriginal people," Maguire said. "This working group will establish an urban aboriginal economic development network in southwestern Manitoba which will generate greater economic opportunities for our whole region."

The Brandon Urban Aboriginal Peoples' Council will develop an aboriginal economic strategic plan to address barriers to employment aboriginal people face and increase their participation in the local economy.

A portion of the federal funding will go toward hiring an aboriginal community coordinator.

"BUAPC) has been working very hard, and need further resources to make this meaningful," said Mayor Rick Chrest. "This is certainly great, great news. I believe that what we can do at this level is help connect the dots, help connect employers and employees, help to connect the aboriginal people in our urban setting with economic opportunities, and this is certainly going to be a great start to that situation."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.brandonsun.com/breaking-news/Government-to-182000-skills-training-291064391.html>

## Montreal Lake Cree women to build homes in their community

**Single moms make better lives for their families through new careers in trades**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 09, 2015 5:30 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 09, 2015 6:40 AM CT



Left to right: Tanya Bird, Shannon Henderson, Rhonda Bird, and Andrea McDonald are all graduates of the Women in Trades program on Montreal Lake First Nation. (Montreal Lake Cree Nation)

Montreal Lake Cree Nation's Women in Trade program has helped four women establish promising careers in construction and carpentry.

The band, which is located about 240 kilometres north of Saskatoon, started the program last year and received eight applicants. Four graduated and were hired by the reserve's housing manager for full-time construction and renovation work.

Rhonda Bird is one of the graduates. She recently helped build a multiplex home in the community. Now she and her coworkers are renovating elders' homes that have fallen into disrepair.



Rhonda Bird and the three other graduates of the Women in Trade program helped build this fourplex in the community. (Montreal Lake Cree Nation)

"I'm just proud to be doing this for my community," Bird said.

They are putting in new floors, cupboards, and renovating bathrooms, according to Daisy Gamble, the housing program manager at Montreal Lake Cree Nation.

"We're trying to make people's lives better, and I think that's what we've done already," Gamble said.

After these renovations are done, the construction team will build a home from the ground up.

### ***New careers, new lives***

Gamble said she can tell her newest construction workers are getting a lot out of their work.

"These girls were very shy stay-at-home moms. They came out and they're really outspoken now," she said.

Bird said these opportunities changed her life. Her first dream was to be an astronomer, but that dream never came to fruition. She was a stay-at-home mom on social assistance, now she's working full-time and said she's setting a good example for her children.

"It just makes me want to climb onto a mountain and scream, that's how happy I am," Bird said. "I want to keep moving forward. I want to go back to school and get my journeyman."

Gamble said she hopes other First Nations communities will follow their example by empowering women in the community.

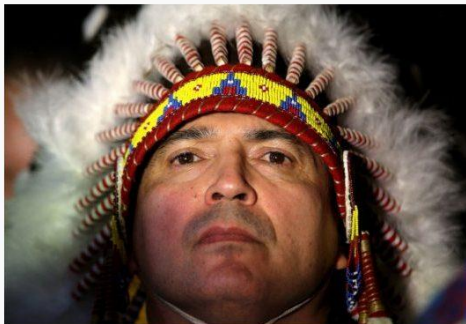
"It's been almost a year now since these four ladies have worked. They've come a long way from where they were before. To us, that's success. They've helped themselves," Gamble said.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/montreal-lake-cree-women-to-build-homes-in-their-community-1.2947919>

## Aboriginal Politics

### **First Nations Financial Transparency Act: median salary for a chief is \$60,000**

*Toronto Star analysis of salaries posted online under First Nations Financial Transparency Act show median salary for a chief is \$60,000.*



The data "should tell you that First Nations chiefs and councils are paid fairly," says Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde.

**By:** [Joanna Smith](#) Ottawa Bureau reporter, Published on Sat Feb 07 2015

OTTAWA—Call him the zero-dollar chief.

Randy Porter is the chief of [Bonaparte Indian Band](#), a small community about 80 kilometres west of Kamloops, B.C., and he collects nothing — no salary, no honorarium, not even any travel expenses — in exchange for his elected duties.

"I'm blown away by the amount of money that is being paid to some of the chiefs. Just blown away," says Porter, whose own band has seen its share of financial troubles.

“That was my choice. It’s just my way of putting back, as opposed to taking,” says Porter, who already has a full-time paying job as an accountant at Thompson Rivers University.

Like many Canadians, Porter has seen the headlines about oversized salaries — such as the \$914,000, including an \$800,000 bonus, paid to another B.C. chief, Ron Giesbrecht of Kwikwetlem First Nation, which caused a stir when it was revealed in documents posted online under the [First Nations Financial Transparency Act](#) last fall.

However, a Toronto Star analysis of the salaries of chiefs published so far show that the Giesbrecht payment is one of the outliers.

All but 28 of the 582 First Nations subject to the legislation now have their audited consolidated financial statements and schedules of remuneration and expenses posted on the government website, and the data shows the median total of salary and honorarium earned by chiefs in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2014, excluding travel expenses, was \$60,000.

While there were five chiefs who took home more than \$200,000, excluding travel expenses, there were 42 chiefs who received less than \$10,000, including eight who received nothing.

### **What they make**

Jessie Willms

The data includes salary and honorarium information for 647 chiefs, which is greater than the number of First Nations communities that submitted the information because some chiefs either began or finished their time in office during the fiscal year.

Pro-rating the salaries and honorarium so that chiefs who served during only part of the year can be compared to those who were there the entire year puts the median annual salary at \$64,697.

The government has [imposed sanctions](#) on First Nations that have yet to comply with the Financial Transparency Act.

“I think it should tell you that First Nations chiefs and councils are paid fairly,” says Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde.

“We have some exceptions, but there are also some that are at the opposite end of the scale, like even below the poverty line,” Bellegarde says. “You should not take the one or two examples to the extreme and paint all the chiefs with the same brush.”

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, which for years called for greater transparency when it comes to First Nations financial information, points out the income is tax-free but it also stresses the outliers do not tell the whole story.

“Please don’t consider the figures below as ‘the norm’ — plenty of aboriginal politicians don’t make anywhere near the amounts in the table,” Colin Craig, its Prairie director, wrote in a [Dec. 11 blog post](#) comparing some of the highest salaries to the gross incomes of nearby municipal politicians.

“But just as we see with discussions about compensation and benefits for off-reserve politicians, it’s the outliers that receive more attention,” Craig wrote.

The Conservative government says the legislation makes First Nations band councils more accountable to their members and brings in the same level of transparency expected from other governments.

“It helps ensure that First Nation community members have the information necessary to make informed decisions about their leadership and it creates a better environment for private sector investment which could lead to greater economic development opportunities and improve the quality of life for First Nation communities,” said an emailed statement from the Aboriginal Affairs department, which refused to grant an interview for this story.

## **CHIEFS BY THE NUMBERS**

*Data compiled and analyzed by Andrew Bailey*

Highest income for a First Nations chief: \$914,219

Lowest income: \$0

Median income: \$60,000

Median prorated income: \$64,697

Highest travel expenses: \$162,417

Lowest travel expenses: \$0

*Source: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada*

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/02/07/first-nations-financial-transparency-act-median-salary-for-a-chief-is-60000.html>



## Wahta Mohawk activists use online data to weigh band finances

***Karihwakeron Tim Thompson, a community activist in Wahta Mohawk Territory, wants more accountability, but thinks the First Nations Financial Transparency Act went about it the wrong way.***



Cody Storm Cooper

Karihwakeron Tim Thompson, an activist at the Wahta band, wants more accountability, but thinks that to post First Nations salaries online without context is a problem.

**By:** [Joanna Smith](#) Ottawa Bureau reporter, Published on Sat Feb 07 2015

OTTAWA— One aboriginal community member who would welcome the increased accountability promised by the [First Nations Financial Transparency Act](#) says the federal government went about it the wrong way.

Karihwakeron Tim Thompson is a community activist in [Wahta Mohawk](#) Territory, near Bala, Ont., and one of a group of people involved in a months-long protest last year that involved blocking access to the band administration office.

His group, [Wahta Community Fire](#), was able to use the numbers posted online under the First Nations Financial Transparency Act to get their first glimpse at the monetary decisions made by the newly elected council, whose first two weeks in office were the last two weeks of the fiscal year reflected in the [documents](#).

Thompson says the numbers showed they gave themselves a raise.



“It doesn’t look good. It’s a bad indicator after two weeks in office,” said Thompson, explaining the First Nations Financial Transparency Act provided his group with their first opportunity to see those details.

Wahta Mohawks Chief Philip Franks explained that it has been at least a dozen years since chief and council last saw an increase in their daily rates and that since their elected positions are usually only part-time jobs, the figures he expects to release at a general meeting in March will not be as high as his critics fear.

“I’m pretty sure that people will see that it’s not a huge amount of money,” Franks said.

Thompson acknowledges the numbers come without context and said that is the problem. What First Nations need, he argues, is not salaries of chiefs and councillors posted online but governance codes that ensure greater accountability — not just of money but of decision-making processes — to their members.

“If (the federal government) were truly serious about First Nations empowerment and growth, they would create incentives by providing funds to strengthen governance structures in communities,” says Thompson, who says the new council at Wahta Mohawks did away with administrative and financial codes developed by the previous council.

Franks says the codes were [problematic](#) and that the council is actually working to improve them with greater consultation with the community before bringing them into force.

“But the current so-called transparency Act, all it does is create ammunition for negative-minded people to go after First Nations,” Thompson says.

“In many ways it was a distraction for First Nations and a distraction for First Nations governance,” Thompson says.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/02/07/wahta-mohawk-activists-use-online-data-to-weigh-band-finances.html>

## Aboriginal Sports

### **Metis player disputes race played role in Manitoba hockey fracas**

[National News](#) | 11. Feb, 2015 by [APTN National News](#) |



**(RCMP officers intervened at a hockey game in Thompson, Man., Sunday.)**

*APTN National News*

**THOMPSON, Man.**—A player with the Thompson King Miners is disputing claims a fracas that forced the premature end to a hockey game and intervention by local Thompson, Man., RCMP on Sunday was triggered by racism.

Lucas Hanlon, 17, plays right wing for the Midget AA Thompson, Man., hockey team which played back to back games against a team from Norway House, Man., this past weekend. The RCMP was called to the second game on Sunday after a melee broke out in the stands.

A player for the Norway House Northstars team and two parents told *APTN National News* [Tuesday morning that some Thompson fans hurled racial epithets at the Norway House team.](#) They also said one player was confronted by three Thompson fans, two men and a woman, who used racial slurs. They also claimed one Norway House player had his helmet cracked by a slash to the head.

Hanlon, however, is disputing those claims. He said things came to boil in the arena after some confusion surfaced following a penalty shot when parents and fans from Norway House began yelling at the referee which drew in the Thompson side who started yelling back.

“They had been yelling at the refs from what I could see,” said Hanlon. “Then the Thompson parents began yelling at them for yelling at the ref.”

Hanlon said things began to escalate following a couple of scrums at the Norway House net as the Thompson team began to pull ahead 3-2 in the second period. They were trailing 2-1 after the first period. Hanlon said he was cross-checked in the facemask by a Norway House player who was ejected and given a five minute major.

With a Norway House player in the penalty box in place of the ejected player, the referees called a penalty shot after a Thompson player was hacked down during a rush,

said Hanlon. The Thompson player scored on the penalty shot, but the Norway House side expected the player in the box to be let out.

“That’s not the case because the penalty shot is a penalty in and of itself,” said Hanlon, who also referees minor hockey. “That is when things flew out of hand.”

Hanlon claims that the ejected Norway House player then went into the Thompson side of the stands, a crowd gathered and a punch may have been thrown. By this time officials called the RCMP and the game ended.



Hanlon said the RCMP escorted both teams separately out of the arena. The police also seized video of the game from a Shaw TV producer.

“19 years of broadcasting hockey games, I have never had my footage become ‘exhibit c’ in the court of law,” tweeted producer Paul Andersen. “#norwayhousevsthompson.”

Hanlon said overheated play on the ice spread to the stands causing the situation to get out of control.

“It was messy. I just disagree with the comments of prejudice. I am a Metis player myself. We have a lot of Aboriginal players on our team,” said Hanlon. “We have just as many people with Aboriginal roots in our community as anywhere else.”

Hanlon said he didn’t hear any racial taunts hurled at the Norway House players. He said the Norway House fans called him “white trash.” He said racial slurs are hurled by both sides during games.

“You get kind of used to it from playing against those teams for so long. It happens both ways. I personally don’t because I come from both backgrounds,” he said.

Hanlon said he didn’t see anyone get slashed in the head with enough force to crack a helmet.

Hanlon said many in the Thompson hockey community are now worried the planned Rogers Hometown Hockey tour stop scheduled for the community on March 7 and 8 may be scuttled because of the bad press stemming from the weekend's incident.

“There is a lot of talk that they may pull out now because of what was going on with comments made by *APTN*,” he said. “It doesn't seem fair to lose something like that over a conflict that happened between us with another team that went both ways. Both teams were giving it to each other...I know most of our players couldn't say anything about Aboriginals because they are Aboriginal.”

*APTN* could not on Tuesday evening reach Norway House's coach, the parents or the player who initially made the allegations.

*APTN* could not reach the head coach of the Thompson King Miners Tuesday evening. The head coach was out of town during the weekend game which was handled by two assistants.

NorMan hockey league officials did not return a request for comment.

**Direct Link:** <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/11/metis-player-disputes-race-played-role-thompson-man-hockey-fracas/>

## **Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources**

### **Indigenous Canadians Are Fighting the Uranium Mining Industry**

February 11, 2015

By [Michael Toledano](#)



The Northern Trappers Alliance camp at night. All photos courtesy of Joey Podlubny

*This post originally appeared on VICE Canada.*

On November 22, 2014, a small group of [Dene](#) trappers called the [Northern Trappers Alliance](#) set up a checkpoint on Saskatchewan's Highway 955, allowing locals to pass while blockading the industrial traffic of tar sands and uranium exploration companies. On December 1, officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police descended on the site with an injunction from the province and forcibly dismantled the blockade.

Eighty days later, the trappers remain camped on the side of the highway in weather that has routinely dipped below -40 C. They are constructing a permanent cabin on the site that will be a meeting place for Dene people and northern land defenders.

"We want industry to get the hell out of here and stop this killing," said Don Montgrand, who has been at the encampment since day one and was named as one of its leaders on the police injunction. "We want this industry to get the hell out before we lose any more people here. We lose kids, adults, teenagers."

"They're willing to stay as long as it takes to get the point across that any of this kind of development is not going to be welcomed," said Candyce Paul, the alliance's spokesperson and a member of the anti-nuclear Committee for the Future Generations. "It's indefinite."

"We don't want to become a sacrifice zone. That's where we see ourselves heading."

The trappers say an unprecedented rise in cancer is the legacy of contamination from nearby uranium mines. With significant tar sands and uranium deposits in their area, the trappers are developing a long-term strategy to halt the industrial growth threatening to deform their surroundings and scare away the wildlife they depend on for food, income, and culture.

About an hour north of the alliance's location, a [recent discovery](#) by Fission Uranium Corp. could lead to the development of one of the world's largest high-grade uranium mines.

Further north, abandoned and decommissioned uranium mines already host millions of tons of radioactive dust (also known as tailings) that must be isolated from the surrounding environment for millennia, while no cleanup plans exist for the legacy of severe and widespread watershed contamination that is synonymous with Uranium City, Saskatchewan. To the east, "[an integrated uranium corridor spreading over 250 kilometers](#)" hosts the largest high-grade uranium mines and mills in the world, with their own stockpiles of radioactive tailings and a decades-long history of radioactive spills.

To the west, about 140 kilometers by air, the open-pit mines, [poisonous lakes](#), and petrochemical facilities of Alberta's tar sands have caused [a number of highly publicized human health and environmental crises](#). In Saskatchewan's northwest, the impacts of this development are felt through [acid rain](#) that degrades the soil, vegetation, and water.

"When they spew the pollution, it affects our water, lakes, fish—any kind of species. Our traditional life destroyed with these oil mines around us," said Kenneth, one of the trappers. "We're in the middle of these oil mines and the government's still not listening."

"We know our water isn't as good as it used to be," said Paul. "You see more [fish with lesions](#)."

The trappers are in conflict with elected leaders to their south, including local governments who are developing ties with industry and making decisions affecting lands beyond their jurisdiction. The province is looking to indigenous lands in the north for new bitumen and mineral mines, a high-level [nuclear waste dump site](#), and the construction of nuclear reactors to encourage "[environmentally responsible](#)" tar sands extraction by exporting energy to Alberta.

"We know the government really doesn't care about the northern people. They would rather see us move out of our region," Paul said. "We're in the way."



Descharme Lake, a tiny Dene community in northern Saskatchewan



"I won't pack up my home and leave just like that," said Jean Marie Montgrand, an elder from Descharme Lake, [speaking in Dene in a translated video](#). A tiny hamlet, Descharme Lake has a population of about 40 and relies on well water and wild foods. Residents say they are being encouraged to abandon the community and move to towns in the south. Notably, its public school was just closed.

"I live off the land and from that lake. Fish, ducks, moose, rabbit—everything I need is there," he said. "We don't live off store bought foods."

More than 85 percent of northern Saskatchewan residents are aboriginal, while 95 percent are indigenous in the trappers' remote area. Most people speak Dene, often as a first language.

In the last days of January, the Northern Trappers Alliance invited supporters to attend a meeting on the future of their camp. They say it drew about 150 attendees.

"There were people there from all directions of the Dene nation," Paul recalled.

From diverse communities in BC, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and Manitoba, aboriginal people brought similar stories of colonization, industrial growth, and ecological devastation spreading hand-in-hand.



Brian Grandbois speaks at the Northern Trappers Alliance meeting

"We allowed the newcomer to come in and, because we were so kind, now we have nothing," said Brian Grandbois, an elder from Cold Lake, to the group.

" [Cold Lake](#) has no territory left—it's all oil-developed and they have no access to it anymore," said Paul. "Same with [Fort McKay](#). There's no access, there's gates

everywhere. Janvier's getting close to that point. So the warning was: 'Don't let them through. Don't take the deals.'"

Companies are currently in the exploration phase of their projects, meaning that any large-scale mines are years away. But the trappers say animals are already being scared away by "road-building, drilling, line-cutting [tree-cutting], big trucks and equipment," and "work camps." Contractors are leaving conventional and chemical garbage in their wake, and overtaking traditional areas. The recent "[monster](#)" uranium discovery has brought many more companies to the region, increasing traffic and the likelihood of a major mine.

"They're drilling all over the place," Paul said. "If they're scaring off all the wildlife and we can't actually live from hunting and fishing anymore, that's going to be a loss of our rights." In Beaver Lake Cree territory, a similar loss of [constitutional rights](#) is the subject of an [enormous legal challenge to tar sands development](#), alleging that Canada and Alberta issued more than 20,000 permits without ever consulting the affected community.

"They're drilling in our backyard and we never got consulted," said Bobby Montgrand, Jean Marie's son. He is a leader at the camp and was named as such on the government's injunction.



Bobby Montgrand in the trappers' tent in early December

The Saskatchewan government differentiates between industrial exploration and development, and does not consult with aboriginal people or groups until full-scale mines are planned. In the exploration phase of projects, "consultation" has mainly consisted of advertisements, radio announcements, and an open house where eight corporations presented concurrently about their (often already in-progress) operations. Regional politicians note that more consultation will occur when a mining project is officially proposed.



Candyce Paul summarized the typical progression: "They're up there for a few years, and then they tell people that they're up there."

While the province agreed to meet the Northern Trappers Alliance, they would not meet under the alliance's terms.

"We wanted the government to come and meet only on the land, and not behind closed doors. What we had actually said was, so that earth could hear their lies," said Paul. "More truth, more honesty, will come out on the land than behind closed doors."

The roots of this distrust date back decades, if not centuries.

In 1977, before the uranium mine closest to the trappers' camp at Cluff Lake was approved, First Nations and Métis leaders called for a moratorium on uranium development until existing indigenous land claims were resolved. The government's Cluff Lake Board of Inquiry excluded from its deliberations any consideration of the effects of mining on aboriginal rights, prompting many First Nations and Métis leaders to boycott the hearings.

The Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians (AMNSI) did not boycott. The group spoke plainly to the board: "The proposed uranium development represents only one of hundreds of corporate and government decisions to commit robbery, theft, and even genocide against our people."

Arguing that aboriginal title to the land had not been legally extinguished, AMNSI asserted: "It is only just that it be our people who determine whether or not this development be allowed to proceed."

Regardless, the mine was built.

More than three decades later, a legal letter sent on behalf of the Northern Trappers Alliance picks up this thread, arguing that the Dene community has never surrendered its lands and therefore still holds indigenous title to them. Quoting a [recent Supreme Court of Canada ruling](#), the letter asserts that the right to determine how the land will be used still belongs to the Dene people.

The letter argues that "the Crown is in breach of its duty to consult and accommodate" and "the RCMP are then exceeding their jurisdiction when they are escorting commercial vehicles of the uranium and oil interests into this unceded, unsurrendered territory." It demands "proper consultation" and that "the RCMP desist in assisting commercial vehicles to encroach on Indigenous Title lands."

A response from the Attorney General of Saskatchewan refutes the Dene argument: "The Government's position is that Aboriginal title was surrendered by Treaty throughout the province and, accordingly, we do not consult in relation to such claims."

This position, that treaties extinguished aboriginal title, is questionable.

"Those of us that belong to the numbered treaties—the violations are very evident," said Brian Grandbois. "Our people didn't understand English back in the late 1800s. The treaties were signed with Xs because our people never talked English, they never wrote English," he explained.

"Before the ink was dry on those treaties, they were violated. They were negotiated in bad faith. They dealt with a people that could not understand their language."



Fuel drums left behind by exploration companies

A [legal analysis](#) submitted to the Key Lake Board of Inquiry in 1980, as they pondered licensing a new uranium mine, commented that "the extinguishment of title by treaty is subject to some question on account of the Indian understanding of the terms and explanations" and that "serious doubts exist as to the extinguishment of Métis aboriginal title." The report also quotes an earlier scholar, who inferred that aboriginal signatures were forged on the treaty that affects the alliance's region: "...on Treaty 8 documents nearly all of the marks next to the Chiefs' names are identical, perfectly regular with a similar slant, evidently made by the practiced hand of one person."

In the shadow of this colonial history is a contemporary health crisis.

The Key Lake project operates today as the largest high-grade uranium mill in the world, becoming known across Canada when operators [accidentally spilled](#) hundreds of millions of liters of radioactive liquid into the environment in 1984.

Closer to the trappers, the Cluff Lake mine was decommissioned in 2006. The mill was demolished, the open-pit mines filled. The tailings ponds were de-watered and millions of pounds of radioactive dust were buried, ostensibly forever, under an "engineered soil cover" and planted over with trees. Long-term environmental monitoring is tasked to Areva, the former operator of the mine.

"Some of the local people have gone to work on the decommissioning of the Cluff Lake Mine and they know that those tailings were leaking and that the work was not permanent—they'll leak again," said Candyce Paul.

[The project's decommissioning plan](#) projects that it will leave the former mine site "suitable for traditional land uses consisting of casual access, with trapping, hunting, and fishing," though it acknowledges leaving behind contaminated surface and groundwater. A [2005 study](#) found moose near uranium mines had elevated levels of radionuclides in their edible tissues; Chief Ted Clark says locals frequently hunt moose near the old mine.

"Many people have been getting sick... it's a concern even amongst the young people. In a three month period six people died in the community of cancer, and these are not really old people—like people in their 50s, people that have worked in the mines," said Paul. "A high rate of the people who worked in the Cluff Lake mine are no longer with us."

"AREVA is not aware of any death of former Cluff Lake employees," the company rebuked in a statement to VICE, noting that 24 former Cluff Lake miners still work for the company. Areva cited a study that found uranium miners healthier than the general population with the exception of lung cancer incidences. The company said its tailings facilities are "routinely inspected" and argued that "the risk of breach is negligible."

"In Canada AREVA's uranium mines are heavily monitored by federal and provincial regulators, who keep the company in check in terms of environmental performance," the statement said. At the center of this regulatory regime is the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), which [publicly promotes](#) the scientific fallacy that low levels of radiation do not contribute to cancer. In contrast, the National Academies of Sciences have [found conclusively](#) that any exposure to ionizing radiation will increase the risks of developing cancer.

Broadly, [government](#) and [industry](#) maintain that the land, water, air, and traditional foods surrounding uranium mines are not adversely affected by development. However, a [Pembina report notes](#) that "the environment and biota in the vicinity of uranium mines has been contaminated with radionuclides, particularly via windblown dust from tailings sites," and identifies "significant potential increases in cancer risks to humans from the consumption of caribou in the vicinity of uranium mines."

Calls for baseline and [epidemiological](#) health studies on the impacts of uranium mining and milling on nearby communities have gone unanswered by both government and industry since the 1970s. [Author Jim Harding](#) notes in a [recorded lecture](#): "There is still no baseline data, which is the first step in any credible social or health impact research. Industry continues to be allowed to operate in the dark without any fundamental ecological or legal accountability."

"For us to look at it on a quantitative level, we have no choice but to experience fatalities on a very small group of people," said Susnaghe Neneh, Paul's partner.

"Prior to the openings of the mines it was a rare, rare occasion when somebody got cancer and died from it. This is what the Elders in all of our communities are saying—there was no cancer. It was maybe once in a blue moon somebody would get that," Paul said. "This kind of an economy comes with its hazards and a shortened life span is one of them.

"If the government wants these projects to come through, they just do not increase any funding and kind of force [communities] into a corner," she argued. "We saw that directly with the English River First Nation, with the [Cameco deal](#). The leaders were being told Indian Affairs is going to be cutting their fiduciary responsibility, so you better start looking at other ways to get funding."

As the federal government [cuts](#) millions from First Nations budgets—[impacting](#) health, education, and job programs—they encourage northerners to work in the mines through multi-million dollar [training subsidies](#). The government says it is fostering aboriginal "[self-sufficiency](#)" by cutting funds, when it is actually creating dependency on revenue from extraction.

In 2013, Saskatchewan Premiere Brad Wall endorsed this policy with bravado, telling a group of his supporters that "the best program for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan is not a program at all—it's Cameco."

Cameco is the world's largest uranium company.

"We don't want our people to be engaged in only mining, ever," Paul said. "When it's done, when it's over, you're going to have a whole generation of people that have nothing."

"We want input on what type of development we have. We'd rather develop a locally, sustainable economy that doesn't interfere with how people live.... We're trying to promote renewable energy choices. We're trying to promote alternative housing—fostering independence, local food sovereignty projects."



A unity flag at the northern camp

At the meeting in January, Dene people discussed territorial mapping that would be useful for land claims, and talked about "helping each other build homes" as a step toward solving their northern housing crisis. An idea of ecotourism, designed to teach reverence of nature to people likely to invest in extractive industries, was floated.

Most significantly, Paul said, "we decided that we're going to work towards a land-based education, because one of the things that has been happening is people are being brought in off the land for the sake of educating their children. So they're not on the land full time, which government interprets to be, 'Well, there's nobody out there.'

"As soon as the land is emptied out, they will go in and do whatever they want. So the position is to occupy the land."

Cameco has secured a social license by [spending millions](#) on northern hockey arenas, school programs, aboriginal scholarships, youth and elders events, and charitable programs like "[touchdown for dreams](#)" which, without a shred of irony, "will grant seven to ten wishes each year to Saskatchewan women with a life-threatening diagnosis of cancer."

Other corporations have made similar efforts to integrate into communities: Fission sponsors a volleyball team and summer camp programs, while the Nuclear Waste Management Organization made a [phenomenally insensitive](#) sales pitch to bury nuclear waste during a healing circle held by indigenous Elders to address the problem of youth suicide. Streets in La Loche were paved with money from Oil Sands Quest.

These enticements haven't resonated with Jean Marie Montgrand. "The white man does not look out for our best interests," the Dene elder said. "If we went into their house and asked for coffee they would not give it to us unless we had money... We're not like that. We would offer maybe tea or bannock if we had any and ask for nothing in return. White people aren't like that. When you have nothing, you have nothing. If we had no money how could we eat?"

Fission Uranium has courted local Chief Ted Clark of CRDN, [appointing him to an executive advisory board](#), offering him stock options, and retaining paid services from a company he owns. He told me "I don't think this constitutes a conflict of interest. What I do think is it benefits the community in a way," arguing aboriginal involvement means better environmental oversight on projects.

"We are two communities that are highly unemployed. We're looking for ways of finding employment," Chief Clark said. "If development is going to happen, then we want to be there alongside you. Not holding a shovel. We want to be up there. Right in the executive seat."

"There's a lot of animosity between the elected leaders and the people in the camp," Paul said, in an apparent understatement. The group maintains that the leaders of La Loche and CRDN are making decisions, without jurisdiction, that are detrimental to their

communities. On this colonial frontier, [Indian Act](#) systems of hierarchy and individualism are replacing Dene systems based on consensus and mutual aid.

This animosity has led to mud-slinging. Chief Clark told me that the roadblock was used to exclude people on the basis of race (also noting that the excluded person worked for industry), while Mayor Jolibois argued that Don and Bobby Montgrand "and their friends" had "nothing better to do" than set up an elaborate ruse to accumulate donations.

"They don't even have a trapper's license.... They don't have anything behind them. They're just blowing out words," Mayor Jolibois told me. Government officials confirmed that only Jean Marie Montgrand is licensed to trap commercially, but noted First Nations and Métis people don't require a license to trap for themselves.

In almost three months, neither Clark nor Jolibois have come out to the camp site, while officials at all levels of government rejected the alliance's invitation to attend their three day meeting.

"Government doesn't intend to listen," Paul said. "Government wants one result and one result only, and that's not the result that we intend. Whether they're here or not, we're having this meeting, and we're going to come up with our own solution, not [one] from government of any kind."

As the trappers build their cabins, supporters are trickling in from across Dene lands. A fundraising event was held for the alliance in Edmonton, while donated supplies and funds have accrued from across Saskatchewan and are regularly delivered to the camp by Stewart Martin, a supporter.

"I got a call from Don this morning and he said, 'You wouldn't believe it—people are still coming.' People are still coming out there and supporting," Paul said. "One of the strong things about the LaLoche area is everybody, man, woman, and child, all speak the language."



Don Montgrand

"This is the first time Dene people have come out with a big voice," said Don Montgrand. "There are Dene people all along this area. It's straight Dene."



"We've got nothing left up north. Just a little piece of green land and a little bit of clean water left, in this whole of northern Canada," Don said. "I'll tell you that for sure."

"Unless we pull together somehow we won't have any land left," said Jean Marie Montgrand. "The white man is taking over."

"We have to do it," Don said.

"For our kids. Our generations."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.vice.com/read/a-dene-alliance-formed-to-resist-uranium-and-tar-sands-mining-in-saskatchewan-892>

## **Eagle Spirit pipeline plan obtains 'licence' as B.C. First Nations chiefs sign on to project**

[Claudia Cattaneo](#) | February 12, 2015 10:10 AM ET



Calvin Helin, chairman and president of Eagle Spirit Energy Holdings Ltd, and member of the Tsimshian First Nation. "We are very cognizant of how important this is to Canada, and Alberta in particular, and we have a solution," he said Wednesday.

Just as proposed bitumen pipelines through British Columbia seemed hopeless because of widespread opposition, backers of the aboriginal-led Eagle Spirit pipeline plan announced a major breakthrough Wednesday. The group has solid support from the province's First Nations for its \$14-billion-to-\$16-billion project linking Alberta's oil sands to the West Coast and an invitation to the oil community and the Alberta government to get on board.

What made the difference? The one million barrel-a-day pipeline plan, plus a possible refinery that would cost extra, started with getting First Nations involved, offering them a large equity stake, and obtaining their ‘social licence.’ There were also growing concerns about transportation of oil by rail, which aboriginals see as inevitable if oil pipelines aren’t built. And there was encouragement from Alberta First Nations familiar with resource development and benefiting from the oil sands business.

“We are very cognizant of how important this is to Canada, and Alberta in particular, and we have a solution,” Calvin Helin, chairman and president of Vancouver-based Eagle Spirit Energy Holdings Ltd., and a member of the Tsimshian First Nation in northwestern B.C., said Wednesday at a news conference in Calgary. “The chiefs came out today to say they are prepared to be partners.”

To show they mean it, the chiefs, all from B.C., signed a declaration of support in the heart of Canada’s oilpatch and laid down a set of principles under which they are prepared to do business, such as acceptance that they are the owners and stewards of the land, environmental regulations that are consistent with their traditional laws, and fair ownership in projects.

Among them were Chief Dan George, of the Ts’il Kaz Koh First Nation; Chief Archie Patrick of the Stellat’en First Nation; Larry Marsden, Head Chief, on behalf of the Gitsegukla hereditary Chiefs; Art Mathews, Head Chief, on behalf of the Gitwangak Hereditary Chiefs; Wes Sam, Business and Economic Development Lead, Burns Lake Indian Band.

With so many other plans in the works — including the more advanced Northern Gateway pipeline proposed by Enbridge Inc. — that are struggling to make headway, Eagle Spirit’s lack of firm commercial backing so far, and First Nations’ skinny track record at leading big projects across the finish line, it’s easy to be skeptical.

Yet the plan, first announced last year in partnership with the Vancouver-based Aquilini Group, a large construction company and owner of the Vancouver Canucks hockey team, has overcome the most significant stumbling block to pipeline projects so far by persuading aboriginals that they have more to gain than to lose.

Eagle Spirit has been working on several route options and expects to pick one in the next two months. It would run north of the Northern Gateway right-of-way, ending either in Prince Rupert or further north. As many as 80% of the 20 to 22 First Nations impacted support the project, and many more around B.C. are getting onside, Mr. Helin said.

The northern options cross fewer water bodies than Northern Gateway — which has already received regulatory approval — reducing the risk of water contamination if there is a spill; impact fewer First Nations, including some that are more open to development because they have experience with the oil and gas business; and lead to ports that are better suited than Kitimat, Northern Gateway’s endpoint, Mr. Helin said.



Aboriginal backing is expected to lead to smoother regulatory reviews and could mean the pipeline could be shipping oil to tankers bound for Asia by the end of the decade, said David Negrin, president of Aquilini Development and Construction Inc.

Mr. Negrin said the plan has made large strides in the past three months.

“They see the rails coming and they see the oil coming, and they want to be a part of it,” he said. “The message we wanted to put out to the Alberta government is that the door is open to come and talk.”

There would be no shortage of capital in Asia to fund the pipeline, nor of expertise to build it, he said. The group has had some discussions with Houston-based pipeline company Spectra Energy Corp., an Enbridge competitor. How its ownership would be split has yet to be finalized.

Aboriginal oil sands entrepreneur David Tuccaro, a director of Eagle Spirit, said Alberta First Nations involved in the oil businesses showed their B.C. counterparts there is upside to resource development.

“Whether we like it or not, the oil will come out of the oil sands and has to end up somewhere,” said the president and CEO of Tuccaro Inc., a treaty Indian from Fort Chipewyan. “What we are doing here with the B.C. chiefs is make them realize that the profit that comes out of the pipeline is going to help their communities with education and with poverty that has been there for many years.”

The announcement came at a bad time for the oil sector, where the main preoccupation is cutting investments, not making new ones, due to the oil price slump.

“This should be the best news, then,” Mr. Helin said. “There is a future to the market.”

**Direct Link:** [http://business.financialpost.com/2015/02/12/eagle-spirit-pipeline-plan-obtains-licence-as-b-c-first-nations-chiefs-sign-on-to-project/?\\_lsa=8709-a6cb](http://business.financialpost.com/2015/02/12/eagle-spirit-pipeline-plan-obtains-licence-as-b-c-first-nations-chiefs-sign-on-to-project/?_lsa=8709-a6cb)

## **Land Claims & Treaty Rights**

### **After Mount Polley: 'This is Indigenous Law'**

Six months after dam breach calamity, First Nation takes the lead on mining regulation.

By [Jerome Turner](#), 7 Feb 2015, Ricochet



Imperial Metals-owned Mount Polley mine became site of most devastating tailings storage facility disaster in Canadian history.

Thursday marked six months since the Imperial Metals-owned Mount Polley mine became the site of the most devastating tailings storage facility disaster in Canadian history, when nearly 25 million cubic metres of toxic mine effluent waste and chemicals spilled.

The spill damaged both Hazeltine Creek and Quesnel Lake, which reside within the traditional territorial boundaries of the Secwepemc Nation.

An official report on why the spill happened from the Mount Polley mine itself was set for release at the end of January, but the B.C. government altered the regulations. Now a report from Mount Polley isn't due until 2017.

Such moves from the provincial government have spurred the Secwepemc, and specifically the Xat'sūll (Soda Creek) First Nation, to take steps to ensure nothing like Mount Polley happens again.

The Northern Secwepemc te Qelmucw leadership council, which is composed of four northern Secwepemc bands, finalized a [mining policy](#) dated Nov. 19, 2014. Formation of the mining policy began in 2012, but the Mount Polley spill provided the council the motivation to finish it.

"One thing I want to make perfectly clear is this policy isn't a wish-list," said Jacinda Mack, leadership council co-ordinator. "This is prescriptive. This is indigenous law. We did very thorough research and took more than two years to release the final document."

The leadership council had mining experts and lawyers comb through the policy, which is now part of the partnership between mining proponents, the province, and the northern Shuswap. Mining proponents have a definite baseline framework to abide by on Secwepemc territory, Mack added.

"This goes above and beyond anything the B.C. government currently requires from a mining company," Mack said. "We have compiled the best mining practices in the world into one document."

## **First Nation claims 'inherent jurisdiction'**

The 54-page policy outlines exactly what the Secwepemc expect to happen within any current or future mine on its more than 53,000 square kilometres of traditional territory.

"The Secwepemc Nation has un-surrendered and un-extinguished title and rights throughout the Secwepemc traditional territory known as Secwepemculecw," the policy reads. "The Secwepemc Nation has the inherent jurisdiction to provide stewardship of Secwepemculecw and to ensure its sustainability and viability for future generations."

B.C.'s Minister of Energy and Mines, Bill Bennett, declined to comment on the policy. A spokesperson told *Ricochet* by email that the "government is reviewing the northern Shuswap's mining policy document" and is "committed to working with First Nations so they can benefit from economic activity in their traditional territories.

"The Province continues to encourage First Nations to be involved in all stages of mineral development, from exploration to operations and reclamation. Acting in partnership is the best way to provide a meaningful role in land and resource management for First Nations, and to provide for benefit-sharing and new economic opportunities. We will work constructively with the Xat'sùll First Nations to develop a shared vision for land and resource use."

A partnership is exactly what the Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw leadership council is seeking in the release and implementation of the mining policy, and for that to truly take place, their involvement must become more than an afterthought, Mack said.

"We were never consulted when any mine on our territory was built," she said. "We took that into consideration as well as the calls from the public to ensure the devastation caused by the Mount Polley spill is cleaned and never repeated."

Judith Sayers, a strategic advisor and adjunct professor of business at the University of Victoria, has reviewed the mining policy and stresses the importance of it and similar documents from First Nations across Canada.

"As far as governance goes, it's good for any First Nation to create policy about mining, forestry, tourism or any use of land is necessary to move toward self-sufficiency," said Sayers, who is from the Hupacasath Nation. "If you want to do business with us, this is how we want it done. And you decide if you want to do that or negotiate ways you want it done differently. Of course some companies may be shown the door, but that's business."

## **'Precedent setting' for other First Nations**

Part of the mining policy requires proponents to pay for the leadership council to conduct its own environmental review of any incident or proposal, with the council having the authority to accept or deny applications independent of non-First Nations authorities.

"Proponents have to know who they are attempting to enter into agreements with and policies like this, I think, can only be helpful in setting the table for negotiations," Sayers said. "If all parties were at the table for Prosperity mines [projects proposed on Tsilhqot'in land], it may not have had to go to court three times."

"We understand this is potentially precedent setting," Mack said. "We've had other First Nations calling and asking if they can use our policy. The answer to that is yes. Change the name wherever (North Secwepemc te Qelmuw) appears. The more we put pressure on mining companies and the province the better for everyone."

The Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw leadership council have a representative who worked with a panel to uncover why the Mount Polley disaster happened.

A glacial deposit, which was not found in testing prior to construction of the tailings enclosure, collapsed 30 to 35 metres below the corner of the tailings storage facility. Plus the slope of the dam and base of the tailings storage facility contributed to engineering failures, according to the report.

Imperial Metals is pushing to reopen Mount Polley, but the leadership council says there is still much to do before that can be considered viable.

In an on-air interview on Jan. 30, following the release of the Mount Polley report, Minister Bennett failed to mention the Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw report or the fact that the new mining policy is in effect after being adopted by the leadership council. He did say the province is working with industry representatives to resume production at Mount Polley.

"There remains much work ahead before we are even close to that discussion," Mack said. "We are looking at several years of response and engagement in regards to direct impacts of this disaster. We are in no rush to push ahead and reopen."

"We are in the process of implementing our (council's) mining policy, and anticipate phasing in aspects of the policy in the next several months. I do not have details yet of what that would include, but it is our expectation that once we start implementing policy, we will follow up with the companies and government about compliance/non-compliance and next steps with regard to our title and rights."

Sayers cautioned every First Nation to remember the reason and impact of any industrial business contract.

"These agreements belong to the people, meaning today's generation and future generations, because they have to ensure anything that happens on the land allows traditional use to continue and even improve," she said. "Essentially it's the collective rights of a given community that will be affected by a mine."

Sayers added that, to increase economic certainty in current and future development in the province, lands should be transferred back to their respective people.

"People have to learn how to do business the right way. And on First Nations territory, the right way is increasingly being initiated by aboriginal people based on right and title."



**Direct Link:** [http://thetyee.ca/News/2015/02/07/After\\_Mount\\_Polley\\_Indigenous\\_Law/](http://thetyee.ca/News/2015/02/07/After_Mount_Polley_Indigenous_Law/)

## **First Nations man fires back over hunting rights complaints**

By Alex Mccuaig on February 7, 2015.



A local First Nations man is taking exception to characterizations of native elk hunters while the area's MLA is placing blame of the burgeoning CFB Suffield elk herd on the doorstep of the provincial PCs.

"We're First Nations," said Medicine Hat resident Joseph Tobey, who took part in the elk hunt on CFB Suffield.

"If people don't like the laws here in our country, why don't they go back to where they came from and go hunt their own elk."

Tobey said there is a long history of the government breaking treaty agreements with First Nations in Canada.

"We only have a little of the treaties that were original," said Tobey.

"What is wrong with us hunting for food?"

He said claims that bull elk meat is only good for pet food isn't accurate and there are First Nations people who would gladly take meat from hunters who find it unpalatable.

"We hunt them to eat," said Tobey.

"We are not hunting for big horns ... that is hunting for foolishness because you can't eat the horns."

Drew Barnes, Cypress-Medicine Hat MLA, said the whole issue of the elk herd population, which has grown exponentially since being reintroduced to CFB Suffield in the late-1990s, can be traced to resource mismanagement by the ruling PC Party.

"The province has failed to take care of one of our resources," said Barnes.

"To have 8,000 elk out there and to be paying adjacent landowners tax dollars for damages, to not take care of the safety aspect and to not have a plan in place to monitor an important asset to Albertans is just wrong."

Barnes said the province must address the issue by taking into consideration concerns of property owners, hunters and First Nations.

He said he doesn't buy into the argument the provincial government has needed federal government approval to deal with the expanding elk herd prior to it reaching current levels.

"After 43 years, this provincial government should have figured out how to work with the federal government," said Barnes.

More than 1,600 hunting tags have been issued for antlerless elk since the season opened on CFB Suffield in November.

**Direct Link:** <http://medicinehatnews.com/news/local-news/2015/02/07/first-nations-man-fires-back-over-hunting-rights-complaints/>

## **First Nations, B.C. seek new framework for land titles, resource development**

JUSTINE HUNTER

VICTORIA — The Globe and Mail

Published Monday, Feb. 09 2015, 8:40 PM EST

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British Columbia's First Nations communities owe roughly half a billion dollars for treaty negotiations that have, in 23 years, produced just five settlements. There is one more statistic that puts that crushing debt load into context: Only two aboriginal governments are in a position to start repaying their treaty loans.

To cut through the logjam, the B.C. government formally shifted direction four years ago, giving priority to seeking one-off economic agreements with First Nations. The idea had political appeal – why wait decades for treaties if you could sign deals that would quickly deliver benefits to impoverished communities and allow development to proceed?

“Your government will focus attention on establishing agreements with First Nations that will create certainty over our respective responsibilities,” the 2011 Throne Speech stated. “And while treaties may be an option for some First Nations, there are many ways to reach agreements that can benefit all communities – aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike.”

The weakness of that approach is that it does not settle the land title question that has snarled resource development in every corner of the province.

Now, there is an effort to develop an alternative that aims to address aboriginal title without costly court battles or protracted treaty negotiations.

There are two driving forces behind the shift. One is the courts – the Supreme Court of Canada has forced the province to come to grips with the fact that aboriginal title does exist. The second is fiscal and close to the B.C. Liberal government's agenda. Resource revenues are taking a dive, and the province cannot continue to address the question of land title at a glacial pace if it wants to turn that around.

Premier Christy Clark framed the debate in a speech at a natural resource forum in Prince George last month.

She noted that seven years ago, her government's resource revenues were more than \$2-billion. Today the taps have slowed to a trickle of roughly \$470-million. In the budget coming later this month, it is likely the figure will be smaller yet.

Since last fall, discussions between the province and First Nations leaders have led to what could be a fresh framework for negotiations. It is not complete yet, but the objective is to find another path to reconciliation, where First Nations would be able to select from a menu of issues that they want resolved. It could be co-management of permits and programs, but it could also settle the boundaries of aboriginal title.

Grand Chief Ed John of the First Nations Summit said the current choices of treaty-making or litigation are often entrenched in outdated thinking. There are few paths that would lead to the resolution of even small matters. “In the village where I come from, the Ministry of Transportation's contractors clear the snow right up to the boundary of the reserve, and then stop.” He hasn't been able to find someone who is willing to work out a sensible solution.

To forge a new path, the government needs to abandon its “colonial mindset” that has always aimed to minimize aboriginal rights and title, he said. “We’ll try to break new ground with the province in this. Leave the word ‘treaty’ out of it: It is about a process of negotiations.” The result may be a treaty, but there are other kinds of agreements that can be based on aboriginal title.

Perhaps the biggest change is the question of revenue-sharing. Ms. Clark told the Prince George resource forum that far more of the benefits of resource extraction need to be distributed.

“In B.C., for 200 years we’ve done a good job of creating wealth from resources; we’ve done a lousy job of sharing it with First Nations,” she said. “That’s going to change.”

She did not elaborate just how that will change. But former attorney-general Geoff Plant, speaking at the same forum, said the province needs to give up on its hope that industry can shoulder the burden alone.

“Random, ad hoc arrangements – one private deal at a time – are a recipe for uncertainty. Government simply must take the lead here,” he said. “Government has to find the resources to support the provision of greater opportunity to the aboriginal owners of what we used to call Crown lands.”

The price for reconciliation is now part of the cost of doing business in B.C. Ms. Clark’s challenge is to use her considerable powers of persuasion to explain why B.C.’s economy cannot get by without it.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/first-nations-bc-see-new-framework-for-land-titles-resource-development/article22886114/>

## **Hayden King: First Nations crisis is about land. We need a new settlement**

Hayden King

Special to The Globe and Mail

Published Tuesday, Feb. 10 2015, 8:51 AM EST

Last updated Tuesday, Feb. 10 2015, 8:52 AM EST

*Hayden King is Anishinaabe from Beausoleil First Nation on Gchi'mnissing in Huronia, Ont. He is the director of the Centre of Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University in Toronto.*



The Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee haven't always been the best of friends. Still, in hundreds of years of conflict, peace and diplomacy, we figured out how to live and work together on the land. One of the most potent symbols of that relationship is the agreement known as the Dish with One Spoon. This pragmatic arrangement recognized that even as distinct nations, we can share the same territory. But we need to acknowledge our mutual obligations to ensure the dish is always full, "as long as the world stands," as my relative Misko Ki (Red Earth) once said. Importantly, there are no forks or knives at the table with which we can stab each other, just a spoon that we share.

As settlers began to proliferate in what would become the Great Lakes area, they too were invited to eat from the dish. But over time their collective appetite eroded the principles of mutual autonomy, humility and sustainability. The features of that original relationship were replaced with notions of "surrender" and "extinguishment" – sharp objects that cleaved indigenous peoples away from their territories. Today, these newer concepts are still fundamental components of the treaty architecture in Canada. If there is "one issue" running through this "Rich Country, Poor Nations" series that requires resolution, it is the ongoing alienation of indigenous peoples from the land.

At the heart of this story is a continuing clash of perspectives. When the formal confederation-era treaties were created, indigenous nations understood the agreements as providing settlers with some land for farming, grass for animals to graze, timber to build homes, and peace and friendship. Those Dakota and Saukteaux people, among others, would continue on as they had with some help in times of need. But for Canadians these treaties were transactional and extremely profitable: a few dollars per year, some tools, and setting aside tiny plots of reserve land secured the surrender of a country. The enforcement of this latter interpretation has meant widespread impoverishment, breakdown of authentic gender roles, and general social suffering for indigenous peoples.

Despite one hundred and fifty years of protest, this interpretation stubbornly remains the dominant treaty paradigm. While it is often assumed that the courts treat indigenous claimants generously via legal principals such as the duty to consult, that initial presumption of surrender has never been questioned and provincial and federal governments continue to assume exclusive jurisdiction. The recent modern land claim agreements are celebrated for offering restitution yet insist on the extinguishment of title to nine out of ten rivers and forests. More often than not, these new treaties – negotiated by indigenous peoples because there are few other options – end up back in court because of a lack of implementation or the familiar misinterpretation.

There are alternatives. We can imagine an escape from the current treaty approach with a renewed embrace of indigenous political economies. What would the Dish with One Spoon look like today?

Regarding the case of the confederation-era treaties, reserve borders could be blended with provincial or federal Crown lands. In these enlarged areas of indigenous jurisdiction the appropriate Blackfoot, Mushkego (or whichever) nations would "manage" these lands. Where there is overlap in traditional territories, principles of indigenous diplomacy

would be invoked to share responsibility. Provincial, territorial and federal authority would not disappear; these governments would contribute to management plans and administration. Though mining, forestry and hunting might take place, land use generally would conform to principles that respect indigenous community desires and the rights of the land, as was originally intended.

In areas where there are no treaties, Haisla or Dene title to land would be recognized outright and jurisdiction honoured. All provincial and territorial plans on lands where title exists would seek approval and be harmonized with pre-established indigenous land and resource priorities. And on all lands already illegally settled – where Canadians live and work today – significant tax revenue would be directed to the appropriate indigenous nation. This proposal would also have implications for provincial and territorial authority generally. In these zones of shared sovereignty all law and policy would require collaboration and hopefully consensus.

There will be resistance to these suggestions. After all, this is a fundamental challenge to accepted notions of the Crown, as well as a provocation to the constitutional division of powers. Industry will abhor the perceived uncertainty and governments would be loath to forfeit any power and revenue. But in this supposed era of reconciliation, surely Canadians can make the necessary institutional and legal changes to accommodate multiple sovereignties, diverse legal orders, and long-delayed justice on the land. The struggles that indigenous peoples face in nearly all areas of life today are rooted in this “legal” theft. Canadians should be critically reflecting how they came to eat from the dish in the first place, and perhaps considering a diet.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/hayden-king-first-nations-crisis-is-about-land-we-need-a-new-settlement/article22887364/>

## **First Nations issue \$127M bill to Ontario for extracted resources**

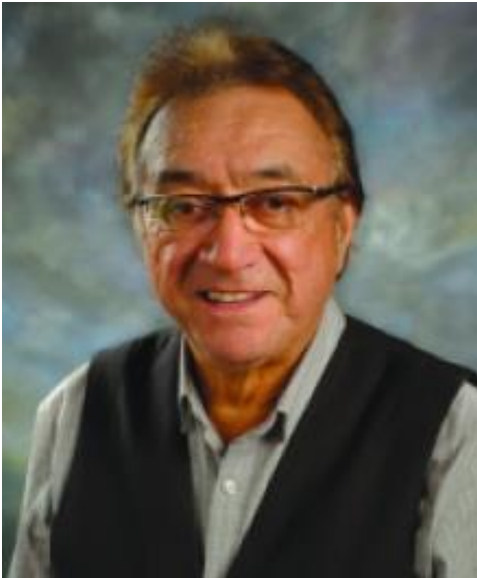
### **Nishnawbe Aski Nation calculates value of centuries of mining, forestry on its traditional territory**

By Jody Porter, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 11, 2015 6:41 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 11, 2015 12:07 PM ET

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation is resubmitting an unpaid bill in the amount of \$127 million to Ontario as part of the province's budget consultation process.

The provincial treaty organization, representing 49 First Nations in northern Ontario, hired York University economics professor Fred Lazar to calculate the current value of resources extracted from its traditional territories between 1911 and 2011.

In Lazar's 2012 report he pegged the figure at 3.2 billion dollars, and then broke that down to an annuity, with a four per cent interest rate, that would amount to 127 million dollars per year, in perpetuity.



Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Les Louttit hopes issuing a bill to Ontario will help correct the province's "misguided" approach to treaty rights. (idobusiness.ca)

Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Les Louttit said he doesn't really expect the province to cut a cheque "but there are ways in which they can invest into Nishnawbe Aski First Nations to improve the value and quality of our lifestyles in our communities."

Those ways include funding such things as housing, water and sewage treatment or social programs to deal with such things as addictions, Louttit said.

The invoice from Nishnawbe Aski Nation was first submitted to Ontario in 2012 and received no response. So Louttit said he resubmitted it, according to the wishes of the chiefs he represents, during recent budget consultations in Thunder Bay.

He said it's a way of correcting the misguided public perception, fostered by the province, about the roots of poverty in First Nations and the rights to resources.

"They convey to the public that [land] was expropriated, it was a land surrender, it was a loss of aboriginal title," Louttit said. "That was not the case in our view, according to our elders and the people who were there when the treaty was signed."

Lazar based his calculations largely on the value of forestry permits issued in Nishnawbe Aski Nation and more than a dozen mines that have been developed in the area.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nations-issue-127m-bill-to-ontario-for-extracted-resources-1.2952626>

# Métis hopeful fishing trip will end with court victory

By [Vincent McDermott](#)

Wednesday, February 11, 2015 6:55:52 MST PM



A Métis fisherman helps Fish and Wildlife officers sort fish into piles at Gregoire Lake on Saturday. Officers confiscated 32 fish caught using a net without a commercial fishing license VINCENT MCDERMOTT/TODAY STAFF

Three Métis fishermen had their fish and nets confiscated during the weekend after illegally catching and selling their catch, and they couldn't be happier.

Alfred Janvier and John Montgrand, respectively from La Loche and Buffalo Narrows, Sask., were charged by conservation officials on Saturday after they were caught selling fish outside the Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre. The men also had a fishing net on Gregoire Lake confiscated after they told officers they did not have a license for it.

After filling three tubs with a total of 240 lbs. of freshwater fish - worth \$450 - caught in Saskatchewan, the two men headed to Fort McMurray to sell their catch outside the general membership meeting of the McMurray Métis. General manager Kyle Harrietha says the Local did not have a role in organizing the protest.

However, the men tipped officials from Fish and Wildlife Enforcement on the scheme, hoping to be charged.

Their goal is to have a court rule whether or not they have a right to fish throughout an area straddling the Alberta-Saskatchewan border.

The two men had sold approximately \$50 worth of fish when two officers from Fish and Wildlife Enforcement confiscated their catch. When the officers arrived, the two men also gave the location for the fishing net.

The two men, plus several supporters, met the officers at Gregoire Lake later that afternoon and pulled the net from beneath the frozen lake. They had caught 32 fish, which officers confiscated along with the net itself.

“As Métis people, we were born in the fur trade, we were born in the Buffalo trade. It was an integral part of our culture to commercially trade between First Nations and European settlers, and we are exerting those historic rights we have as Métis,” said Dwayne Roth, former president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

Alberta Justice spokesperson Michelle Davio says an investigation into the event is ongoing. No charges have yet been sworn against any individuals. But if Janvier is charged, this will not be the first time he has baited the province into a court challenge.

In 2005, he was charged with illegally shooting a moose near the Saskatchewan-Alberta border. The Alberta government dropped those charges in 2008. The next year, he again told the province about an illegal net underneath Gregoire Lake. Several months later, the province again dropped the charges.

Janvier argues that because Métis traditional hunting practices predate the Alberta-Saskatchewan border created in 1905, Canada has a duty to allow him the right to hunt, fish and trap within that cultural area to sustain a moderate livelihood.

“We shouldn’t need a license. It’s a right that we have that’s older than Canada,” he said.

Saskatchewan Métis cannot fish in Alberta without a license, even if it is within land with a proven Métis cultural connection.

While they have constitutionally protected hunting and fishing rights, Alberta requires Métis to first prove they have a genealogical connection to the area they want to fish in. The area can be no larger than 160 square kilometres.

This policy is contested because historically, the Métis were nomadic due to the shifting nature of the fur trade. This means many Métis families and communities are vastly separated.

Roth says that within the border area, there are enough family and kinship networks to justify reestablishing old trade networks between Métis communities. This time, he hopes the case will be heard in court.

“The only way for us to argue we have those rights and establish those rights is to have someone charged and go through the court system to show we have those rights,” he said. “We are hopeful this case will go to the Supreme Court of Canada and establish those rights for Métis across Canada.”

Métis National Council president Clement Chartier attended Saturday’s McMurray Métis meeting when officers arrived, and said he sympathizes with the fishermen.

“A lot of people used to live off the land and a lot still do. What these people are doing is trying to supplement their livelihood while maintaining their heritage,” he said.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/2015/02/11/metis-hopeful-fishing-trip-will-end-with-court-victory>

## **Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women**

### **B.C. didn't follow rules after report of sexual assault at healing centre**

WENDY STUECK

VANCOUVER — The Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Feb. 06 2015, 8:00 AM EST

Last updated Friday, Feb. 06 2015, 9:27 AM EST

B.C.'s child-care ministry mistakenly deleted a report of an alleged sexual assault of a girl placed in an aboriginal healing centre and, when alerted to the missing file, failed to follow up with an investigation that met its own guidelines.

The alleged incident should have triggered a co-ordinated investigation by police and government agencies designed to determine what, if anything, went wrong. Instead, The Globe and Mail has learned, the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development mistakenly deleted an initial report of the alleged incident and, once that error was caught, failed to launch a “tripartite protocol investigation” – one that would have involved the child-care ministry, the health authority that licensed the healing centre and police.

That means the name of the person who allegedly committed the assault may not be included in ministry records. The lack of a protocol investigation is a concern even though the healing centre is no longer operating, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth, said.

“The issue here is that this was a very serious incident involving the safety of a child and potentially other children that should have been handled as a priority by the [Ministry of Children and Family Development] and wasn't,” Ms. Turpel-Lafond said in an e-mail to The Globe. “As a result, an important step, the protocol investigation, did not occur.”

The ministry, citing privacy legislation, says it can't comment on the specifics of any investigation. "What we can say, is that when the ministry is alerted to a safety concern within a contracted agency or funded program, the ministry co-operates fully with any investigations that may involve the agency and/or police," a ministry spokeswoman said in an e-mail.

The procedural disagreement is part of a bigger picture related to the Stehiyaq Healing and Wellness Village, an aboriginal healing centre near Chilliwack that opened in April, 2010, with about \$5-million in government support.

The centre had room for up to nearly 30 clients at a time and was supposed to provide a mix of traditional and modern healing practices to aboriginal youth dealing with substance abuse or other problems. First Nations in the area spent several years lobbying for government funding to get the facility up and running. But it closed in September, 2011, after having enrolled – according to the ministry – only 15 clients.

In November, 2011, according to a delegated aboriginal agency involved, a girl who had been enrolled at the healing centre alleged she had been sexually assaulted by an employee while she was there. The delegated aboriginal agency reported that allegation to police, triggering an investigation. The agency also reported the incident to Ms. Turpel-Lafond and to the ministry.

That should have kicked off a tripartite investigation. But that initial report was deleted – possibly because it was incomplete – and the incident overlooked until Ms. Turpel-Lafond, prompted by the aboriginal agency involved, asked the ministry about the alleged assault.

The ministry then submitted a report to Ms. Turpel-Lafond's office, in March, 2012. But as far as Ms. Turpel-Lafond knows, a protocol investigation was never conducted. The ministry's actions are not believed to have had any effect on the police investigation.

Last year, Darren Justice was charged with one count of touching, directly or indirectly, with a part of his body or with an object, a person under the age of 16 for a sexual purpose and one count of sexual assault. He is scheduled to go on trial in Chilliwack, in March. According to an indictment, the alleged incidents occurred between Aug. 1 and Aug. 31, 2011. The alleged victim's name is protected by a publication ban. Mr. Justice was a former part-time youth worker at the Stehiyaq centre.

The centre closed because it did not attract enough clients or funding to continue operations. The province says it was a partner, not the initiator, of the facility and that it advised the bands involved they would have to find additional sources of funding. For Ms. Turpel-Lafond and others, the demise of the Stehiyaq healing centre is part of a pattern of provincial investment in aboriginal child-welfare initiatives without adequate planning and support.

“These programs live and die by the number of successful referrals,” Shelly Johnson, an assistant professor of social work at the University of British Columbia, said Wednesday. “If the ministry’s not providing the referrals, these programs are going to die.”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/bc-didnt-follow-rules-after-report-of-sexual-assault-at-healing-centre/article22827308/>

## National Day of Action for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women

By

[Krystalline Kraus](#)

| February 7, 2015



National Day of Action for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women

February 14 is the national day of action to bring justice to murdered and missing Indigenous woman across Turtle Island.

Below is a list of participating cities:

**Vancouver:** Saturday February 14th, march starts at noon from Carnegie (Main and Hastings). Feb 14th Annual Women’s Memorial March – DTES. Facebook page linked [here](#)

**Toronto:** 10th Annual Strawberry Ceremony for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Saturday February 14th, Strawberry Ceremony with Elder Wanda Whitebird begins at 12:30 at Police Headquarters, 40 College Street at Bay, Toronto. Facebook page linked [here](#)



**Victoria:** Saturday February 14th at 11 am Our Place (919 Pandora Avenue), noon march to Parliament. Stolen Sisters Memorial March. Facebook page linked [here](#)

**Ottawa:** Thursday February 12th at 5 pm. FSIS 5th Annual Day Of Justice Feast And Ceremony at the The Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health. Facebook page linked [here](#)

**Mississaugas Of The Credit First Nation:** Friday, February 13, 5 pm Vigil – King & Main in Hagersville, followed by Strawberry Ceremony to honour the women held at New credit at the Sacred Fire. Facebook page linked [here](#)

**Winnipeg.** Saturday February 14-2015 @ 1:30 pm – 5:30pm, Bulman Centre: Multipurpose Room University of Winnipeg. March will commence at approximately 2:00 pm. 8th Annual Memorial March for all Missing and Murdered ~ Winnipeg. Facebook page linked [here](#)

**Calgary:** Saturday, February 14, 2014, will mark Calgary's 7th Annual Valentine's Day Women's Memorial March. The event will take place at Scarboro United Church (134 Scarboro Avenue SW) and will begin at 6:30pm with speeches. The march will begin at 7pm and light meal will follow. Facebook page linked [here](#).

**Nelson:** Saturday, February 14th, 2015 12pm. Gathering in front of City Hall, We will gather to share prayers, songs, and stories to honour and grieve the loss of our beloved sisters, remember the women who are still missing, and to dedicate ourselves to justice. Bring your drums. Everyone is welcome to attend. Facebook page linked [here](#)

**Grand Forks:** Saturday, February 14th, 2015 12pm. We will meet in front of the Courthouse at Noon for Smudging, prayers, words and singing – we will then march to the Women's Resource Centre for a slide show and pot luck luncheon. Facebook page linked [here](#).

**Six Nations:** Sunday February 15th from 3-4 pm at Veteran's Park. Second annual Honoring Our Sisters: Walk and Vigil for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Facebook linked [here](#)

**London, Ontario:** Friday February 13th, 2015 from 12-4 pm at 343 Richmond Street. Agenda items include a round dance, feast and prayer for community members who will be attending.

**Denver, Colorado, USA:** Saturday February 14th at noon at 16th Street Mall. Sing Our Rivers Red March. Facebook page linked [here](#).

**Fargo, North Dakota, USA:** Saturday, February 14th from noon-3 pm at Fargo Public Library. Rally in support of our missing & murdered indigenous women across the US and Canada. In solidarity with the ongoing efforts in Canada, & to raise awareness / gain recognition about the very same problem in the US. Facebook page linked [here](#).

**Minneapolis, USA:** Saturday February 14th at 11:30 am at Minneapolis American Indian Center 1530 E Franklin Ave, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404. 1st Annual Women's Memorial March: Sing Our Rivers Red Twin Cities. Facebook page linked [here](#).

More to be added as word becomes available.

**Direct Link:** <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/krystalline-kraus/2015/02/national-day-action-murdered-and-missing-indigenous-women>

## **B.C. government pours proceeds of crime into fighting domestic violence**

Tamsyn Burgmann

SURREY, B.C. — The Canadian Press

Published Friday, Feb. 06 2015, 9:34 PM EST

Last updated Friday, Feb. 06 2015, 9:37 PM EST

Premier Christy Clark is upgrading her government's strategy for ending domestic violence in B.C., with a central role being played by police, even as she divests herself from decisions made by the RCMP on a closely-related issue.

Clark distanced herself on Friday from the RCMP decision to scale back the task force that investigates missing and murdered women along the so-called Highway of Tears.

Six officers were cut from project E-PANA last year, despite warnings to government from top brass the move would impair their ability to conduct historical homicide investigations.

"I don't intend to play a role in directing the RCMP about how they're going to deploy what are increased resources," she told reporters gathered at the main detachment of Surrey RCMP.

The premier said she didn't want to be critical of the force, but that the province boosted the RCMP's overall budget by \$5 million last year.

"So they'll make their decisions and we'll make ours," she said. "And on our list is making sure we deliver on all the recommendations that were made by Justice Oppal's Commission."

Former B.C. Court of Appeal justice Wally Oppal led an extensive public inquiry into murdered and missing women in the province, mainly focused on serial killer Robert Pickton.

Clark referred to completing the report's recommendations as she unveiled the "Violence Free B.C." plan.

She said the province intends to take another step along a path to societal change, starting by diverting money from "the bad guys" to their victims.

The province will use \$3 million in civil forfeiture funds this year to pay for a new Domestic Violence Unit in Surrey, B.C. — the sixth of its kind to open in the province.

The money will also be used for local support services and an awareness campaign. The funds are intended to be rolled over each year.

The strategy will boost prevention programs in schools, develop a provincial sexual assault policy and improve culturally-appropriate job programs for aboriginal women who are rebuilding their lives after suffering trauma.

More than 12,300 people reported they were victims of intimate-partner violence to police in 2013, while 113 woman died as a result of domestic violence between 2004 and 2014, according to government statistics. Aboriginal women are nearly three times as likely to suffer spousal abuse, and their experiences tend to be the most severe.

Aboriginal women make up the bulk of 18 cases originally assigned to the missing women's task force, which was attempting to determine whether a serial killer was at work in the area around Highway 16 or the Highway of Tears.

Some 70 officers staffed E-PANA at its height, but after attrition and the more recent cuts it currently sits at 12.

The budget for E-PANA dropped to \$1.8 million for 2012-2013, from about \$5 million in previous years, according to a table released through a freedom-of-information request.

A spokeswoman for the RCMP, Sgt. Annie Linteau, said she could not immediately provide an answer to queries about how the additional \$5 million was spent within the police's budget.

Pressed on the province's stand-back approach to the project E-PANA cuts, Clark said her government is still working to fulfil another recommendation — improving transportation options along the notorious Highway 16.

Later asked whether a transportation funding announcement would be forthcoming, Minister of Justice Suzanne Anton said that work comprised "ongoing consultation."

“It’s not as straightforward as saying we’ll put a shuttle across (the highway).”

**Direct Link:** <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/bc-government-pours-proceeds-of-crime-into-fighting-domestic-violence/article22851741/>

## **Bernard Valcourt, Kellie Leitch to attend roundtable on murdered, missing aboriginal women**

**Status of women minister and aboriginal affairs minister to join meeting Feb. 27**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 09, 2015 4:00 PM ET Last Updated: Feb 09, 2015 4:00 PM ET



Kellie Leitch, the minister for the status of women, will attend the national roundtable with Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt in Ottawa on Feb. 27. (Adrian Wyld/Canadian Press)

Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt will attend a national roundtable later this month to discuss the issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women, the government confirmed today, despite its refusal to heed growing calls for a national inquiry.

“We all have a role to play in protecting aboriginal women and girls. That’s why Minister Leitch and Minister Valcourt will represent the government of Canada,” Andrew McGrath, a spokesman for Leitch, told CBC News in an email on Monday.

“We look forward to meeting with our provincial and territorial partners, as well as First Nations leaders, to discuss how we can all take action to address this important issue,” the statement from Leitch's office said.

Confirmation of the federal ministers' attendance comes on the heels of [a recent meeting between Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Perry Bellegarde](#), the newly elected national chief for the Assembly of First Nations.

Bellegarde told his executive committee, in a letter obtained by CBC News, that he met with Harper to discuss AFN priorities including "the need for an inquiry on murdered and missing indigenous women."



Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt met in early January with Perry Bellegarde, the newly elected national chief for the Assembly of First Nations. (Fred Chartrand/Canadian Press)

Valcourt also had a tête-à-tête with Bellegarde on Jan. 12 — two weeks before the prime minister met with the newly elected AFN national chief — the office for the aboriginal affairs minister confirmed in an email to CBC News.

CBC News chief correspondent [Peter Mansbridge asked the prime minister](#) in December about the prospect of calling a national inquiry. "It isn't really high on our radar," Harper said.

While the federal government doesn't see the need for an inquiry, the office for Leitch said the government "has taken strong action," including [a \\$25-million plan over five years](#) to address violence against aboriginal women and girls.

The national roundtable is scheduled in Ottawa for Feb. 27.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/bernard-valcourt-kellie-leitch-to-attend-roundtable-on-murdered-missing-aboriginal-women-1.2950566>

## **AFN chief sets expectations for meeting on murdered, missing aboriginal women**

The Canadian Press  
February 10, 2015 11:21 AM

OTTAWA - It may not be the full-blown inquiry he would like, but the new national chief of the Assembly of First Nations says he still has high hopes for what is sure to be an emotionally wrought meeting later this month on murdered and missing aboriginal women.

Among the items on Perry Bellegarde's wish list: more federal and provincial money for housing, safe shelters, day care and wellness centres, more programs to prevent violence and greater co-ordination among the country's various police forces when it comes to investigating cases that involve aboriginal women.

Above all, Bellegarde hopes the two Conservative ministers in attendance — Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt — will share what they hear at the Feb. 27 event with their cabinet colleagues.

"We welcome their support. We welcome their attendance. We had hoped that they would take things back to their cabinet colleagues, that the dialogue and the discussions and recommendations from around the table for the ongoing support for this inquiry, or for an action plan," Bellegarde said in a wide-ranging interview with The Canadian Press.

"That's what we're all trying to address: a co-ordinated strategy, a co-ordinated approach, an implementation plan to deal with this. The feds are there; the provinces are there; indigenous peoples are there; families are there. Let's map this out."

Originally, Bellegarde had hoped three more Conservatives would attend: Justice Minister Peter MacKay, Health Minister Rona Ambrose and Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney.

But he said only two members from each delegation have been invited to the table.

Calls for a national inquiry have been growing louder since RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson revealed last year that nearly 1,200 aboriginal women have been murdered or gone missing in Canada in the last 30 years — hundreds more than previously thought.

Yet the Conservative government has refused to heed those calls, saying now is the time to take action, not study the issue further.

The government's last budget included a five-year, \$25-million renewal of money aimed at stopping violence against aboriginal women and girls.

Ottawa is also spending additional money on shelters and activities to prevent family violence, a DNA-based missing persons database and continuing support for police investigations through the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains and special RCMP project teams.

Still, Bellegarde said he'll keep putting pressure on the government to hold an inquiry.

"It's something that we're going to keep pushing for, because there's that element of opening everybody's eyes to the issue," he said.

"Because it seems like indigenous women and girls' lives don't seem to matter to people. And that's what we've got to change around, because their lives do matter and their lives are valued."

- See more at: <http://www.timescolonist.com/afn-chief-sets-expectations-for-meeting-on-murdered-missing-aboriginal-women-1.1758105#sthash.D8WFOHoc.dpuf>

## **AFN's Perry Bellegarde hopeful ahead of meeting on murdered, missing aboriginal women**

### **Delegates to meet Feb. 27**

The Canadian Press Posted: Feb 10, 2015 8:02 PM CT Last Updated: Feb 10, 2015 8:02 PM CT



Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

Perry Bellegarde, the new national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has high hopes for an upcoming meeting on murdered and missing aboriginal women.

Among the priorities noted by Bellegarde are:

- More federal and provincial money for housing, safe shelters, day care and wellness centres.
- More programs to prevent violence.
- Greater co-ordination among the country's various police forces when it comes to investigating cases that involve aboriginal women.

Above all, Bellegarde said he hopes the two Conservative ministers in attendance — Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt — will share what they hear at the Feb. 27 event with their cabinet colleagues.

"We welcome their support. We welcome their attendance," Bellegarde said, expressing hope the ministers will act on what they hear at the meeting.

"That's what we're all trying to address: a co-ordinated strategy, a co-ordinated approach, an implementation plan to deal with this," he said. "The feds are there; the provinces are there; indigenous peoples are there; families are there. Let's map this out."

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"It's something that we're going to keep pushing for, because there's that element of opening everybody's eyes to the issue," he said. "Because it seems like indigenous women and girls' lives don't seem to matter to people. And that's what we've got to change around, because their lives do matter and their lives are valued."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/afn-s-perry-bellegarde-hopeful-ahead-of-meeting-on-murdered-missing-aboriginal-women-1.2952780>



# Moose hide campaign helps men fight violence towards aboriginal women

Some 250,000 moose hide squares distributed to aboriginal and non-aboriginal men standing up against violence

By Jillian Taylor, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 12, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 12, 2015 5:00 AM ET



Paul Lacerte, founder of the Moose Hide Campaign, speaks at the annual Gathering of Men event in Victoria. (B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres)

Hundreds of men will be wearing a square of moose hide pinned to their chests on Thursday in Victoria, as part of the [Moose Hide Campaign](#), a commitment to ending violence towards aboriginal women and children.

"It's a grassroots movement by men across this country who I think have reached a level of patience towards the issue of violence, particularly against indigenous women and children, but of course against all women in our country," said founder Paul Lacerte.

The organization hosts an awareness event once a year — called Gathering of Men — which brings together both aboriginal and non-aboriginal men to discuss violence against aboriginal women, why it happens and how to end it.

## ***Why moose hide?***

Lacerte, a member of the Cariboo Clan and the Carrier Nation, founded the campaign four years ago. The idea came to him while hunting with his daughter Raven.

The pair were looking for moose along [the Highway of Tears, a notorious stretch of highway in Northern B.C.](#) where 18 women have gone missing, or were found murdered.

Lacerte says they were both touched by the violence that had happened around them. While cleaning a moose later that day, they decided to use its hide for a cause.

"We tanned the moose hide and we cut it up into little squares and we pinned it on our shirts, and we started giving those squares to other men," said Lacerte.



Men are encouraged to wear a square of moose hide as a commitment to raising awareness about violence against Canadian women. (Moose Hide Campaign/Facebook)

That moose hide provided 1,000 squares. Now four years later, the campaign has gone national and handed out 250,000 squares — a quarter of a million commitments to end violence.

"In a country of 30 million people, if there are a million men wearing this moose hide and having those conversations on a daily basis, we think we can change the fabric of our society."

Lacerte says the campaign has become so popular, it's now employing aboriginal women to prepare and distribute the squares.

### ***Holding each other accountable***

"We need to take this upon ourselves as men to a commit to healing ourselves," said Lacerte.

"But also standing up and speaking out and very much occupying the space and saying this is not OK, we are going to support each other as men, but we're also going to hold each other accountable for our actions."

At the Gathering of Men, participants talk about the issues, participate in healing circles, and offer each other support. Lacerte says a lot of violence happens behind closed doors, perpetrated by aboriginal men.

The gathering runs from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. PT on Thursday at the Hotel Grand Pacific in Victoria.

After things wrap up, the men will march to the B.C. Legislature for a public rally and join MLAs who will also be wearing squares of moose hide.

The Moose Hide Campaign is also holding a National One Day Fast for the first time, in partnership with the [Walking With Our Sisters](#) project, a large commemorative art installation in memory of Canada's missing and murdered women.

Fasting is a common practice in aboriginal cultures and demonstrates a deep commitment to a cause or to loved ones.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/moose-hide-campaign-helps-men-fight-violence-towards-aboriginal-women-1.2951754>

## Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

### Native voices: “An Indigenous People’s History of the United States”

by [Stephyn Quirke](#) | 8 Feb 2015



Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph, whose community was driven off its land in Oregon by the U.S. government. After his surrender, he continued to argue against the injustice of the U.S. government. This photo of him is from 1897, about 20 years after he surrendered.

It’s been said that education is what you are left with after forgetting everything you learned in school. And unfortunately for us, American history books already forgot to mention a few things: like human beings inhabiting North America for over 20,000 years before Europeans. In fact, the Europeans our history books call the “original Americans” and “Founding Fathers” didn’t start calling themselves Americans until they started to see themselves becoming more like the indigenous peoples they encountered – a special kind of free people who belonged to this land.

Inside the U.S., it is almost impossible to get a standard education in U.S. history and come away with the knowledge that the United States was founded on genocide, the

largest in world history up to that time. And it's even harder to learn about the nearly 3 million indigenous peoples still living in the United States today, comprising 500 federally recognized indigenous nations and communities.

These are the issues addressed in Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's new book, "An Indigenous People's History of the United States." Dunbar-Ortiz is a renowned activist and scholar who has written extensively on indigenous issues in North America and has spent years organizing with the American Indian Movement. Dunbar-Ortiz is making a rare Pacific Northwest appearance in the middle of this month, with three scheduled talks.

Dunbar-Ortiz will be hosted at Portland Community College's Cascade campus in the Student Union Building, Room 204, on Tuesday, Feb. 17 from 3 to 5 p.m. The next day, Feb. 18, she will speak at Reed College in Eliot Room 103 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., and then at PSU's Native American Student and Community Center from 6 to 9 p.m.

I caught up with Dunbar-Ortiz to talk with her about her new book and to get her views on the state of indigenous resistance today.

**Stephyn Quirke:** *Could you describe your background in the indigenous rights movement, and how that has informed your academic research?*

**Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz:** I was an anti-war, civil rights and women's liberation activist during the 1960s while a graduate student at UCLA. It was actually my dissertation research that led me to involvement in the American Indian Movement and the International Indian Treaty Council in 1974. I was recruited at that time to serve as an expert witness in a federal hearing on the 1868 Treaty, which is what the Wounded Knee uprising had been about. That involvement brought me to focus on oral history as the bedrock of my academic research and writing.

**S.Q.:** *You talk a lot in your book about the importance of naming colonialism and genocide, which is not something everyone is accustomed to doing in U.S. history. Could you tell readers why we need these terms to understand U.S. history?*

**R.D-O.:** These are technical terms of international human rights law that were codified in the post-World War II period in the response to the massive people's liberation movements in Asia, Africa, the Pacific and Caribbean. They delineate precisely what native peoples in North America have experienced under United States colonization.

**S.Q.:** *I recently learned about the history of the Black Hills in South Dakota, a natural formation sacred to the Lakota, and the compensation arrangement you described in your book after it was blasted with dynamite and renamed Mount Rushmore. Could you give readers a brief sketch of this story, and what it says about the kind of justice we need for indigenous peoples?*

**R.D-O.:** As the period of decolonization began, and with the founding of the United Nations, the United States government responded to indigenous nations' demands for

land restitution or self-determination by establishing the Court of Indian Land Claims, but with the proviso that no land would be returned, or monetary compensation for Indigenous lands confiscated without consent by treaties or agreements. The Lakota Sioux did not file for a claim because they did not want financial compensation, rather the return of the Black Hills. Militant actions over two decades, culminating in the Wounded Knee siege of 1973, and the subsequent founding of the International Indian Treaty Council to take the 1868 treaty to the United Nations, led to the 1980 Supreme Court decision, which acknowledged that the United States had taken the Black Hills illegally, but ordered only monetary compensation, which the Sioux refused. The U.S. established a trust fund with the funds, which have now grown to over a billion dollars. This is one of many land issues that must be resolved with restitution of land; in nearly every case, the disputed territories are sacred sites for the particular Native Nation, including the Black Hills. And, in nearly every case, these lands are held by the federal or state governments, not private land holders or municipalities.

**S.Q.:** *You write extensively about the myth that Native Americans disappeared after European settlement, which seems closely related to the myth that the continent was sparsely inhabited or barely managed before Europeans. Could you give readers a rough sense for how long and how extensively this continent had been inhabited by indigenous peoples prior to the start of Official U.S. History?*

**R.D-O.:** The estimate for the original population at the onset of European colonialism is 100 million, with 30 million in North America, including Mexico and Central America, some 10 million north of the Río Grande. Up to the 1960s when native scholarship developed and questioned the figures, the estimate was 10 million for the whole hemisphere, and 1 million north of the Rio Grande. Both the fields of demography and archeology (and of course, anthropology) were highly politicized in their pseudo-scientific attempts to keep numbers low, presumably to lessen the charge of genocide.

Even with the new figures, there remains the master narrative of the “germ theory” of the horrific initial death rates associated with European colonization, supposedly reducing the populations throughout the hemisphere by some 90 percent. This argument, which ignores the other causes of death and disappearance, particularly genocidal warfare and forced removals, also lessens the charge of genocide, as it’s said to be unintentional. However, we know that the majority of Jews subjected to concentration camps died of disease and starvation, not in gas chambers, and this is the case in a genocide.

As to the peopling of the Western Hemisphere, another pseudo-scientific myth remains dominant. The “Bering Straits” theory, which poses the absurd scenario of a single entrance to the continent from Asia, near the North Pole, and spreading to the South Pole, rather than following indigenous people’s trade routes over the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The time frame originally posed for the Bering Straits entry was 5,000 years ago, but archaeological evidence has steadily increased the time of habitation in the hemisphere, to a present estimate of 20,000 years. But, it’s likely more ancient, considering the highly developed civilizations and advanced agriculture developed in South America, Mexico and North America.

**S.Q.:** *Do you think the standard narrative of U.S. history reflects an enforced silence on indigenous genocide? What happens when we break that silence?*

**R.D-O.:** Yes, the standard narrative has avoided dealing with genocide; one recent book by a notable U.S. historian elaborates on the many atrocities committed against native people, but argues that there was no genocide, and calls the process “ethnic cleansing.” However, more radical historians, following Howard Zinn’s lead in his “People’s History of the United States,” do acknowledge genocide. However, as with Zinn, it seems more of a way of doing away with the “Indian question” than tackling the nature of settler-colonialism and its effects on the current United States. It’s posed as more a moral question, loaded with guilt, rather than a historical question with consequences.

**S.Q.:** *You mention Truth and Reconciliation hearings in your book – something I’m familiar with in the context of South Africa and Rwanda. What do you think this process could look like in the North American context? Are there any positive signs that it could happen?*

**R.D-O.:** There are many moves toward apologies and pleas for reconciliation, but not so much truth-telling. The Boarding School research projects in the U.S. and Canada are the most important initiatives. For the past 35 years, indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific and Arctic have been documenting historical and contemporary genocidal practices of governments at the United Nations. There’s certainly enough material and expertise available to hold formal hearings, and in Guatemala they did take place, with actual charges and trials of genocide resulting.

**S.Q.:** *There have been many campaigns recently to support indigenous resistance to environmental destruction: the Seminoles in Florida are fighting a new fossil-fuel power plant, tribes in Washington are fighting coal and oil trains, and last year we saw an eruption of tribes physically closing shipping routes to the Alberta (Canada) Tar Sands fields. What opportunity do you see in these alliances? Does it reflect a broader movement for indigenous sovereignty, or could it turn into one?*

**R.D-O.:** These campaigns are vitally important, and the alliances that are evolving are extraordinary — nothing like it since the early 1970s. For indigenous peoples, it’s a matter of survival, and sovereignty is essential to survival, but the settler population, or at least the youth, is realizing that it is a matter of their survival as well. No people in the world have fought as hard and long for survival as peoples as North American indigenous peoples; they have a lot to teach others, and their leadership, finally, in the climate movement is a turning point.

**S.Q.:** *Public lands in the United States were often created out of land recently stolen from indigenous peoples, and environmental protection since then has often retained an amnesia about this history. What would you say to people who assert that environmental needs are our top priority, and that these are too pressing for us to worry about indigenous issues?*

**R.D-O.:** Public lands, especially national and state parks and wilderness areas are all stolen from native peoples, and these are sacred lands. There can be no separation between restitution of lands and self-determination for indigenous peoples and protection of the environment. Such protection comes from relationships, not stewardship.

**S.Q.:** *Is there a connection between the disruption of indigenous cultural patterns and the disruption of the Earth's biological patterns?*

**R.D-O.:** The system of capitalism that developed in Western Europe through the accumulation of wealth in plundering the Americas and Africa (colonialism) is the same force that has destroyed the ecologies of the planet and now threatens all species, including humans. Indigenous peoples warned of this from the beginning of the onslaught up to the present. The environmental movement (and other social movements) in North America needs to pay attention to and learn from the indigenous people's insistence on land restitution and indigenous self-determination.

**S.Q.:** *As your book documents, U.S. policy toward Native Americans has often moved from direct assaults on their existence to the strange idea that the U.S. government is now "protecting" them. You talk about the modern period of "termination" that began in Oregon with the Klamath tribe, where the government essentially declared that they'd cared for Indians long enough and were no longer going to extend their "generosity." Could you explain this policy of termination and the effects it had on indigenous peoples? How did people fight back?*

**R.D-O.:** The U.S. Congress Termination Act of 1953 is an instance of official genocidal policy, which actually falls under the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The official appointed to implement termination was Dillon S. Myer who had been in charge of the wartime relocation and incarceration of U.S. citizens of Japanese descent. It was a two-pronged plan, using the carrot and the stick. First, the most economically self-reliant Native nations, including the Klamath and the Menominee (Wisconsin) were instantly terminated, their reservations and governments dissolved. Those terminated quickly fell from prosperity to impoverishment, set upon by predatory corporations.

The other part of the plan was one of enticement, called Relocation, which was voluntary and targeted young singles and couples, the expectation being that with only old people left to die off, and the young people assimilated by the exciting urban world of consumer abundance and entertainment, the reservations would simply disappear. It didn't work out that way. Instead, the burgeoning Civil Rights movement offered new methods of resistance to the "urban Indians," who at any rate never divorced themselves from their families and communities back home. The result was the National Indian Youth Council and a little later the American Indian Movement, the Survival for American Indians and many other organizations. In 1974, following Wounded Knee, the Termination Act was rescinded, and the reservations that had been terminated were reconstituted, although irreparable damage had been done.

**S.Q.:** *The Activist Group “Yes Men” recently made national headlines by impersonating State Department officials and telling weapons contractors that the government was going to start purchasing renewable energy from reservations – which would be fully owned and controlled by First Nations. What was your reaction when you saw that stunt? Do you think it’s viable?*

**R.D-O.:** Yes, it was interesting that the weapons contractors found the idea attractive. My reaction to the stunt was “why not?” It’s a perfectly viable idea. I don’t know of any concrete plans in the works, but I know it’s implied in indigenous aspirations, not only in North America, but the rest of the Americas. The real utopists are those who believe that capitalism can be reformed.

**S.Q.:** *You write about “the American way of war” – one based on unlimited violence and the total destruction of the enemy. You write that this was alien to indigenous peoples, and that warfare for them was highly ritualized and involved quests for personal glory, but resulted in few deaths. Why is this important to recognize? Do you think examining the war against Native Americans can affect our willingness to mobilize for war today?*

**R.D-O.:** The first way of war, which became the U.S. way of war, was formed in the 13 British colonies with settlers forming militias to terrorize the indigenous peoples, destroying their villages, food stores and fields, killing everything that moved. That phrase, “kill everything that moves,” was openly used by commanding officers in Vietnam and is taken for granted in other U.S. irregular wars, that is, counterinsurgent wars and wars of occupation since the founding of the U.S. to the present. I think that embedded in the texture of U.S. patriotism, which centers on reverence for the military, is the settler-colonial mindset of extermination. And, I do think that if people become conscious of this, including those who serve in the military, many would recognize the truth and be repulsed.

**S.Q.:** *What are your thoughts on the Idle No More movement?*

**R.D-O.:** Idle No More is an amazing movement, surging from the grass roots of First Nations in Canada and spreading over the continent, emulated around the world. It was theater at the onset, but has continued as a strong and constantly growing base spawning many projects.

**S.Q.:** *Do you see energy from Idle No More coming in to the United States?*

**R.D-O.:** Yes, Idle No More infused energy into the Native movements in the United States. Many locales now have INM representatives who network with their counterparts in Canada and each other. INM fused Indigenous sovereignty and environmental issues like nothing had before. I thought this was visible in the glorious Climate Convergence in New York in September 2014. And it gave more visibility to the “Cowboys and Indians” alliance in the Northern Plains in opposition to the Keystone pipeline.



**S.Q.:** *You emphasize in your book that the survival of indigenous peoples in the United States testifies to successful cultures of resistance – that without it, they would not have survived so many repeated attempts at assimilation and genocide. What does it mean to participate in a culture of resistance, and what responsibility do we have to support such resistance?*

**R.D-O.:** From the beginning of colonialism some five, six centuries ago, those first hit by the brunt of it and survived — the indigenous peoples of the Americas — have always known that it wasn't only about their own survival, but also the survival of humanity, of all life and sustenance. They have continued to resist and to survive, but they cannot overcome and transform without the mass of humanity being involved. Everything now is about survival, so it's not so much a question of supporting indigenous resistance, as joining it.

**Direct Link:** <http://news.streetroots.org/2015/02/08/native-voices-indigenous-people-s-history-united-states>

## Native Americans Say Facebook Is Accusing Them of Using Fake Names

Screenshot from Facebook.com

by [Aura Bogado](#), Monday, February 9 2015, 8:10 AM EST

Dana Lone Hill tried logging on to Facebook last Monday only to be locked out because the social media giant believed that she was using a fake name. In [an essay over at Last Real Indians](#), Dana, who's Lakota and has been using Facebook since 2007, explains that she's presented a photo ID, library card and one piece of mail to the company in an attempt to restore her account. The day after Lone Hill's account was suspended she was able to access it briefly but she was then booted a second time.

In her essay [Lone Hill](#) says that this has happened to other Native users she knows:

I had a little bit of paranoia at first regarding issues I had been posting about until I realized I wasn't the only Native American this happened to. One friend was forced to change his name from his Cherokee alphabet to English. Another was forced to include her full name, and a few were forced to either smash the two word last names together or omit one of the two words in the last name. Oglala Lakota Lance Brown Eyes was bootd from facebook and when he turned in his proof of identification they changed his name to Lance Brown. After contacting the Better Business Bureau and threatening Facebook with a class action lawsuit, they sent him an apology and let him use his given name again.

To reestablish a [Facebook](#) account after being accused of using a fake name, users must submit one government-issued ID such as a birth certificate, passport or voter identification card or two other forms of identification such as library card and a yearbook photo. The company appears to have been questioning certain Native users since at least 2009, when it [deactivated Parmelee Kills The Enemy's account](#). More recently, on Indigenous Peoples' Day, Facebook deleted a number of Native accounts. In one case, the company asked users Shane and Jacqui Creepingbear for identification to prove that they weren't using fake names. Shane took to Twitter to express his disappointment:

Via Facebook messenger, Shane says that the couple's ordeal came to a swift end when he had some friends who work in the tech industry contact Facebook directly. Shane, who's part of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, says that he and Jacqui have "administrative shields" on their Facebook accounts and that their names will no longer be questioned.

"It's a problem when someone decides they are the arbiter of names," says Shane. "It can come off a tad racist."

Facebook's 10-year-old real-[name policy](#) stipulates that users "provide the name they use in real life." However, the social network doesn't require people to use their *legal* names, according to an open letter the company's chief product officer, Chris Cox, [posted](#) last October. In the letter Cox apologizes to "drag queens, drag kings, transgender [people], and [to the] extensive community of our friends, neighbors and members of the LGBT community" whose accounts had been shut down after a user reported hundreds of them as fake. At press time no such apology has been issued to Natives.

In a statement to Colorlines, a Facebook spokesperson wrote:

"Over the last several months, we've made some significant improvements in the implementation of this standard, including enhancing the overall experience and expanding the options available for verifying an authentic name. We have more work to do, and our teams will continue to prioritize these improvements so everyone can be their authentic self on Facebook."

The spokesperson also told Colorlines that any identification provided by users is reviewed and verified by a single Facebook employee and then immediately destroyed—which may calm some privacy concerns.

Lone Hill, who went by Lone Elk until she found her birth certificate last summer, tells Colorlines that she submitted her documents to the company last Tuesday only to receive an automated e-mail asking for even more documents—“credit cards, Social Security numbers, stuff I’m not comfortable sending.” Lone Hill says she misses having access to her nearly 2,000 Facebook friends and doesn’t know if she’ll ever be able to recover photos of her four children that she stored in her account.

A [petition demanding Facebook change its policy](#) toward Native names, started about four months ago, has garnered more than 9,000 signatures.

#### **Update, 4:14p ET**

Dane Lone Hill’s account was restored by Facebook today after being suspended for the better part of a week. Lone Hill had posted about her ordeal on Last Real Indians on Friday, which Colorlines picked up and published a post about Monday. In an email addressed to Lone Hill at 2:58p ET and forwarded to Colorlines, Facebook explained:

Hi Dana,

It looks like your account was suspended by mistake. I’m so sorry for the inconvenience. You should now be able to log in. If you have any issues getting back into your account, please let me know.

View updates from your support dashboard: [REDACTED]

Thanks,

Harvey  
Community Operations  
Facebook

#### **Direct Link:**

[http://colorlines.com/archives/2015/02/native\\_americans\\_say\\_facebook\\_is\\_accusing\\_the\\_m\\_of\\_using\\_fake\\_names.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2015/02/native_americans_say_facebook_is_accusing_the_m_of_using_fake_names.html)

## **Native Americans talk gender identity at a ‘two-spirit’ powwow**

by [Jorge Rivas](#) | February 9, 2015  
Jorge Rivas/Fusion

San Francisco's Cow Palace has hosted livestock expositions, Rolling Stones concerts, and a U.S. heavyweight championship.

But this Saturday, it was home to something really special: the nation's only Native American powwow for "two-spirited" tribe members that's open to the public.

Two-spirited people don't all define themselves in the same way. Many say they embody both male and female characteristics, and that such a role was recognized and honored by their tribes before colonization. Others might identify as gay when they're around outsiders.

At the Cow Palace, they came together seeking community, and to raise awareness of some of the issues that LGBT people face on reservations, like hate crimes and high rates of suicide.

The term "two-spirit" is a relatively modern term but the concept is not. And the concept of a more complicated gender system has become fairly common in the mainstream: Half of all Millennials believe that gender exists on a spectrum and that it is not limited to the categories of male and female, [according to a Fusion poll released last week](#).

Open to the public, the Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirit Powwow, is the only event of its kind in the nation. Organizers estimated two thousand people attended the powwow on Saturday.

Fusion asked attendees at the powwow what it means to be Native American and two-spirit.



**Landa Lakes**  
**San Francisco, Calif.**

Landa Lakes grew up in a Christian home in a Chickasaw tribal community in Oklahoma.

Lakes has always identified as someone who fell in the gay spectrum.

“But once I learned that two-spirit was a term coined by our own native people then I knew it was something that I could embrace,” said Lakes, who helped organize the powwow on Saturday.

Lakes defines two-spirit as the mixture of masculine and feminine.

“The term two-spirit also helps solidify who we are and puts us in a category that’s a little bit different from the modern-day culture because we’re trying to keep to our traditions that left when we left our rural settings for more urban settings.”

(Landa Lakes is Miko Thomas’ self chosen name. “It’s a tongue-in-cheek reference for the famous butter mascot because I like to point out that even in today’s world we’re still using native people as mascots.”)



**Sheldon Raymore**  
**New York City**

Sheldon Raymore grew up in South Dakota on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation.

“Two-spirit means being born with a male and a female spirit,” said Raymore, who was the lead two-spirit dancer at Saturday’s event. Raymore had several regalia changes, performing as both male and female.

“Two-spirit is the appropriate word to use in today’s society,” said Raymore, who said his Lakota people have a native term for people that identify with both spirits.

“We went from living in tee-pees to living in houses, so in every sense of the way things have changed. But we’ve managed to survive and carry on our traditions and our language to stay true to who we are as a people.”

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**Talon Stammers, 17**  
**Berkeley, California**

“Two-spirit means you have two parts to your spirit, the feminine and masculine side, as well as those gender identities that aren’t necessarily woman and man,” said Talon Stammers.

Stammers said going to the powwow was important because it helped two-spirited people heal together.

“When the conquistadors and the different travelers changed everything by colonizing it they made it so that it wasn’t socially acceptable to be two-spirit,” Stammers said. “Now we’re coming back together to heal one another who have been hurt by this.”

(Males and female Native Americans with ‘two-spirits’ have been documented in over 130 North American tribes. French Jesuit missionary Joseph-François Lafitau noted “men who dress as women” in the book “Customs of the American Savages” in 1724.)

Talon is in high school and is openly two-spirit.

“I go to school with a lot of people that have widely varying identities so it’s not a big deal amongst them that I’m two-spirit.”



There were scenes at the two-spirit pow that were unusual even to people who regularly attend pow-wows. There was a special contest only for transgender-identified dancers, which the head dancer performed both male and female dances. Someone named Charlie Tippie Toe Ballard came in full regalia, including a wig that made him at least two feet taller.



**Charlie Tippie Toe Ballard**  
Oakland, Calif.

“Two-spirit is a whole person that embodies feminine and masculine traits. They are caring and all around good people, friend to everyone,” said Charlie Tippie Toe Ballard, whose mother is Anishinaabe from Michigan and father is from the Sac and Fox Nation in Oklahoma.

“If people want to call me two-spirit, that’s fine, but I’m Charlie.”

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**Spirit Wildcat, 31  
Fort Hall, Idaho**

Spirit Wildcat said she traveled to the powwow from Fort Hall, Idaho, to show solidarity.

“I came here to represent the Montana two-spirit society as one of the first royalties that they’ve had,” said Wildcat, a member of the Shoshone-Bannock tribe.

“As long as both female and male spirits are within you, then you can identify as two-spirit.”

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**Derek Smith**  
**Bay Area, Calif.**

Derek Smith says having two spirits means that you walk in two worlds.

“Really all of us should have that have that feminine and masculine side. Wether we’re nurturing or providing, or hunting and gathering, we always have those roles to play,” said Smith, who is Anishinaabe.

Smith said he most commonly identifies as a gay man unless he’s around other Native Americans.

“Explaining what two-spirit means can be complicated, if I was in a non-native community most of the time I don’t think I would identify as two spirit because it’s inviting this long conversation that people may not understand,” said Smith, who helped organize the powwow.

“Queer and gay are also fine, I don’t think it’s different.”



**Ruth Villasenor**  
**Bay Area, Calif.**

“The term two-spirit is a modern term so when people hear that term they automatically assume it’s male and female, which is how many people define it,” said Ruth Villasenor.

“But to me it’s more of a historical reminder that before colonization all of our tribes had multiple genders. There were terms for various genders in all of our nations and we were known by the roles we played in our communities, not our genders.”

Villasenor is one of the founders of the two-spirit powwow.



**Aiden Warrior, 27**  
**Boise, Idaho**

Aiden Warrior defines two-spirit as a third gender but points out there's another important element required: a connection to the tribe.

“Someone who is two-spirit is actively participating in our culture,” said Warrior, who is an enrolled member of the Echota Cherokee Tribe of Alabama. “We are at ceremonies, we're at powwow functions and our culture is a part of us.”

“Historically my tribe included two-spirit people, but currently they don't celebrate it because of the influence from white settlers,” Warrior said.

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**Jacob Edwards Dunlap**  
**Sacramento, Calif.**

Jacob Edwards Dunlap said he traveled two hours from Sacramento for a sense of community.

“I’m looking for connections and a place of belonging,” said Dunlap, who said he is Anishinaabe.

Dunlap defines two-spirit as a gender term.

“Two spirit is not necessarily related to my sexuality but it exist in relation to my gender. Two Spirit in relationship to my tribe means that I inherently have spiritual gifts—or what some people call medicine—to offer to the community.”

**Direct Link:** <http://fusion.net/story/46014/native-americans-talk-gender-identity-at-a-two-spirit-powwow/>

## **Authorities Probe Alleged Hate Crime Against Native American Kids**

February 09, 2015 4:26 PM ET

[Charles Michael Ray](#)



A small protest in Rapid City, S.D., including members of the Native American community, gather in front of the Civic Center where the incident occurred.



Oglala Sioux leaders and city officials at a press conference following the incident discuss possible charges, which could include child abuse, hate crimes and assault.

An investigation into a possible hate crime is underway in Rapid City, S.D., after a group of men [allegedly assaulted Native American kids at a minor league hockey game](#). The incident angered many in the community, and racial tensions in Rapid City are running high.

The group of middle-school students made a two-hour bus trip from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to a Rapid City Rush hockey game in late January. The school-sanctioned outing was a reward for academic achievement.

But the group left the game in the third period when some men sitting above them in a corporate box allegedly began to pour beer on and shout racial slurs at the parents and students.

Angie Sam says she believes her 13-year-old daughter and 56 other students, ages 9 to 13, are victims of a hate crime.

"Some of our kids — they've had nightmares, they cry," she says, as she herself fights back tears. "We as parents, we cry for our kids, because we protect them. And they were being rewarded for good behavior, and these drunk, white men ruined that for them."

The incident was reported on social media after the game, then to law enforcement. Rapid City Police Chief Karl Jegeris condemned the attack and said charges could include hate crimes.

"It is what I would call 'scorching of your soul,' so it upsets me greatly that this occurred here in our community," he says. "And it certainly is a criminal act that occurred; we do have an ongoing, open criminal investigation."

Suspects in the investigation have not yet been named, and police say any charges could be weeks away.

"Being patient in this process is part of it, but we can't be too patient — we need action," says Mato Standing High, an attorney for some of the families involved. "Rapid City should not tolerate the abuse of children, period."

Standing High says the incident adds to racial tension that already was elevated [by a police shooting of a Native American man in December](#). He notes a pattern of troubled race relations extending all the way back to the white settlement of the area in the late 19th century, but says that what's different this time is that it involves so many kids.

"You add on top of that factors of race, and that's when people get really, really excited and taken back in history to horrible treatment that Indians have faced," he adds.

Many of those like Standing High say that past racist acts or even hate crimes against Native Americans here have occurred with few repercussions. Social media is seen as a game-changer in this case.

The Native community is using it to organize protests, which have been attended by Native Americans and others. Organizers see that type of cross-cultural communication as a positive step, but note that it will take more than one rally to heal the deep racial divisions here.

Chase Iron Eyes, an attorney and a founder of the group [Lastrealindians](#), spread the story on his website after it was posted on Facebook. He warns that anyone who is overtly racist now runs the risk of being called out on the Internet.

"We control our own presses, we control our own media networks," he says. "We reach a million people a week, for instance, on my media network, easily. And so things are changing. There's an evolution here, coming."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2015/02/09/383835807/authorities-probe-alleged-hate-crime-against-native-american-kids>



# King County Council Remembers 1865 Exclusion of Native Americans

[Richard Walker](#)

2/10/15

It was 150 years ago that Seattle's first city council banned Native Americans from entering the city. But the pain from that act continued to be felt by succeeding generations as bigotry and injustice followed.

The exclusion ordinance was enacted in 1865. The following year, the local representative in Congress, Arthur Denny, opposed the establishment of a reservation for the Duwamish, further bolstering the Duwamish diaspora. Twenty-eight years later, in 1894, settlers burned to the ground the last Duwamish longhouse in the area. Today, the Duwamish Tribe is still fighting to restore its relationship with the United States, with whom it signed the Treaty of Point Elliott of 1855.

The bigotry and injustice of Seattle's exclusion ordinance was "a lesson that generations thereafter continue, unfortunately, to repeat," King County Councilman Rod Dembowski said on February 2. "We had the Chinese Exclusion Act [of 1882]. The Japanese American community was excluded in the [Second World] War. Hopefully we don't ever see that again."

The King County Council took a step to help heal the pain. The council proclaimed February 7, the 150th anniversary of the Seattle exclusion ordinance, as Native American Expulsion Remembrance Day.

Councilman Larry Gossett, who with Dembowski introduced the proclamation, noted that the 1865 exclusion ordinance came just 13 years after Si'ahl, the leader of the Duwamish people for whom the city of Seattle was named, welcomed the first settlers and helped them survive here. Exclusion "was extremely hurtful to the Native Americans who had for thousands of years made this their homeland," Gossett said.

Several local Native American leaders spoke at the proclamation hearing, thanking the King County Council for the effort to promote healing and understanding.

"It is so vital and important to remember our history, whether good or bad, whether positive or extremely negative," said Claudia Kauffman, Nez Perce, a former state senator. "We need to make sure everyone knows about our history, about our strengths, about our talents and resilience," the latter a reference to the fact that Native Americans still live in Seattle, are educated in Seattle, are involved in Seattle, and raise their families in Seattle. "Seattle and King County [have] a rich history, and we need to celebrate it and celebrate it every day," she said.

Chris Stearns, Navajo, former chairman of the Seattle Human Rights Commission who now chairs the state Gambling Commission, said, "What you are doing is incredibly



important. As the senator said, Native Americans are here. The city, the county were built on the foundation that is Native America. I'd also like to say that we are the future. There are some wonderful young leaders and young elected officials [in the Seattle area]." The proclamation "really means a lot to us. And I think it's something the council can truly build upon."

Matt Remle, Lakota, an educator and journalist, offered a greeting in Lakota and acknowledged the Duwamish people, "on whose lands we are on today ... I too am a guest in their lands as a Lakota person."

Remle said the proclamation "goes well with the recent actions by the Seattle City Council to establish Indigenous Peoples Day on the second Monday of every October and efforts by the Seattle School Board to bring forth the 'Since Time Immemorial' Tribal Sovereignty Curriculum. It fits well with trying to educate about the misinformation -- and [the] histories that a lot of us didn't get in our schools."

It's not the first time King County has taken a stand to promote healing and correct injustice. In 1986, the County Council renamed the county in honor of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The county was originally named in honor of William Rufus de Vane King, a pro-slavery U.S. senator from Alabama who served as U.S. vice president in 1853.

*Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/10/king-county-council-remembers-1865-exclusion-native-americans-159130>*

## **Editorial: 'Indigenous People's Day' a first step of recognition**

**Posted: Monday, February 9, 2015 6:19 pm**

Poetry and Congress are, it seems, a mixed bag when it comes to learning history.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow gave us "Paul Revere's Ride," a poem about the Revolution which is shot full of inaccuracies that have risen to the status of myth.

Then there's that child's ditty about Columbus, 1492 and the "ocean blue." The poem is accurate as far as it goes — it even has it right that Columbus didn't land in what is now America — "It was the Bahamas, and it was hot." The poem also does something much popular history glosses over — it notes that the Bahamas were not an empty place: "The Arakawa natives were very nice; They gave the sailors food and spice." And it ends with a reminder of something Americans have gone to great lengths to forget: "The first American? No, not quite."

But we are nothing if not easily led by the nose.

President Benjamin Harrison proclaimed Friday, Oct. 21, 1892, the 400th anniversary of Columbus' landing, a national holiday. In April 1934, after lobbying by the Knights of Columbus and New York City Italian leader Generoso Pope, Congress and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt proclaimed Oct. 12 a federal holiday under the name Columbus Day. And like the Arakawas, the truth of what happened to America's true first people — and sometimes any mention that they existed at all — was largely swept away.

While it's unlikely school children will ever be taught the actual history of what happened to native Americans when they collided with European immigrants, some people are working to at least recognize, as the poem says, who was here first: "The first American? No, not quite."

After persistent lobbying from a Native American group called Idle No More Michigan, the Traverse City Commission took a small but significant step when it designated the second Monday in October — the same date as the federal Columbus Day holiday — as Indigenous Peoples Day.

So far, that's all it is — a designation. But there will no doubt be more to come. Supporters were to begin planning how to recognize the new holiday.

Idle No More member Randy Day said the group will work to find the best ways to recognize the history of the native people of the area while celebrating the community's diversity.

The city says it's done for now. "It's just out there, it's not something we are going to do anything with," said commissioner Jim Carruthers, who sponsored the resolution.

The city Human Rights Commission, which drafted and recommended the resolution, did talk about ways to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day but currently has no plans, said Lee Hornberger, commission chairman.

Day stressed that non-natives don't understand how important this issue is to native people. But they should. It has been estimated there were as many as 50 million native people in north America by the time Columbus got here, but they were virtually wiped out by war with the Europeans and, more completely, by diseases like smallpox, influenza and bubonic and pneumonic plagues, for which native Americans had no immunity.

There will still be a Columbus Day; there's little chance Indigenous Peoples Day will be celebrated by a separate day off or a parade down Fifth Avenue in New York (that Columbus Day parade celebrates Italian-Americans' contributions to the Big Apple).

But it will be marked here, where some thousands of American Indians still live, and will no doubt grow over the years. That's a start.

**Direct Link:** [http://www.record-eagle.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-indigenous-people-s-day-a-first-step-of-recognition/article\\_0421f8b8-113f-55fd-aabf-9161d2434e8c.html?mode=print](http://www.record-eagle.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-indigenous-people-s-day-a-first-step-of-recognition/article_0421f8b8-113f-55fd-aabf-9161d2434e8c.html?mode=print)

## **Australia May Stop Providing Water and Power to Remote Aboriginal Communities**

February 9, 2015 | 7:10 pm

Up to 200 indigenous communities in Australia could lose access to power and water because the government says it can no longer afford to deliver the basic services.

The remote communities are mainly located across the northern tip of Australia and the Kimberley in the country's northwest. The federal government [announced](#) late last year that it would stop paying for the utilities, making states responsible for the communities. The Western Australia (WA) state government says it can't afford to cover the costs.

Rodney Dillon, an indigenous advisor at Amnesty International Australia, told VICE News that some members of the indigenous communities might not survive a move.

"It would be a complete culture shock, a complete mental shock," Dillon said. "This is their homeland. It's where they belong it's where they are proud. They are the keepers of the land. Some might stay and die on the land. The older individuals won't manage it — it might kill them."

While some communities stay on the land permanently, others live in the region seasonally, making population numbers small, variable, and sometimes difficult to [measure](#).

An [audit](#) in 2009 found that only 7 percent of the communities measured met basic infrastructure and service standards.

"The state government is concerned that the drinking water is generally not treated nor monitored in more than 180 small remote communities and outstations," Housing Minister Bill Marmion said in a statement late last year.

'The older individuals won't manage it — it might kill them.'

[Initial hopes](#) of establishing a \$1 billion "Royalties for Regions" fund, which would have used 25 percent of the state's mining royalties to cover the cost of power and water for the communities, were quashed this week by WA Premier Colin Barnett, who [stressed](#) that the government has not yet reached a solution.

Minister for Regional Development Terry Redman originally floated the "Royalties for Regions" idea, but has since said he was "misunderstood" by the media. He stressed to VICE News that it was simply one option.

"There have been no decisions made about closing communities or what services in a particular area get resourced by government," he said.

Asked if communities had been contacted about the potential closures, the state's Aboriginal Affairs Minister Peter Collier said last week that a consultation that involved "going out to all the communities" would be "just nonsensical," and that "consultation in a general sense will continue" instead.

Dillon said such a consultation has been non-existent so far.

"The communities haven't been contacted, no one's asking anything," he said. "This is going to be done without consultation, it will be a couple of blokes with a coffee in Perth making these decisions."

The government will decide which communities stay open and which are "not viable" for investment, Dillon added.

The Partnership of Western Australian Aboriginal Land Councils invited Barnett and other key WA politicians to discuss the issue in early March, but they have yet to receive a response.

"We're not expecting that the government will come and speak to us," Anthony Watson, chairman of the Kimberly Land Council, told VICE News. "All we're asking for is for someone to say, 'Here's a timeline, here's when we'll know more and when decisions will be made.'"

Watson said the dialogue should have occurred last year, and that it now needs to be done as soon as possible.

"We've been talking about making these communities sustainable for a long time," he said. "We would welcome firsthand engagement, and would only ask that the government respect our decisions."

The criteria that determines whether a community is viable has not been released, but both Redman and Barnett have stressed the likelihood that at least some of the 274 communities in the state will have to close, perhaps as many as 200.

'Suddenly people had access to alcohol, to illicit substances. It was just an absolute state of poverty.'

Lauren Pike, a spokeswoman for the Kimberley Land Council, described what happened in 2011 when the government shuttered an indigenous community in Oombulgurri, a community in the eastern Kimberley, and relocated the residents to Wyndham, about 45 kilometers away.

"The result was just devastating," Pike said. "They literally told these people to get out of their homes and that they couldn't stay or come back, and then dumped them in the mangroves around the town.

"Houses weren't provided — nothing was provided," she continued. "People in the town literally had to hand out borrowed sleeping bags and blankets for these people coming in so they could have something to sleep on outside. It caused so much trouble in the community, and it only got worse from there. Suddenly people had access to alcohol, to illicit substances. It was just an absolute state of poverty."

Barnett said in a statement to VICE News that the government can't stop people from living in their communities, even if they lose access to power and water.

"Communities will not be 'closed,'" Barnett said. "There is nothing to stop people going on to land, but there are going to be issues about the continuing provision of power and water and other services to 274 communities."

He also stressed the need for governmental process, and said that, "any reform will not happen overnight."

Dillon believes any future living conditions in the remote communities would consist of the bare minimum.

"They would be moved to very poor conditions," he said. "They're frightened and scared and they speak a different language. Now they're all possibly going to be moved into slums and shanty towns in the city."

Groups campaigning against the closure also believe moving the indigenous people into new towns would cost the government more in the long run than if they just maintained the status quo.

"If you move these people, out into this total state of disillusion, away from their entire way of life, you can't wonder why so many are at such high risk of turning into drunks, paupers and beggars," Dillon said.

Watson agreed, noting the government could also end up being forced to pay significant legal costs if the closures are challenged in court.

"WA generates a lot of royalties, and the cost of litigation, of forcing these people out... It's hard, takes a lot of time and would be a very messy process," he said.

**Direct Link:** <https://news.vice.com/article/australia-may-stop-providing-water-and-power-to-remote-aboriginal-communities>

## **Native Americans gather in Montana to protest slaughter of Yellowstone bison**



By Laura Zuckerman

(Reuters) - Native American activists gathered in Montana's capital on Tuesday to protest the deaths of hundreds of Yellowstone National Park bison killed this year to ease the worries of Montana ranchers about a cattle disease carried by many park buffalo.

The demonstration marked a week of protests over federal-state management of Yellowstone bison that entails culling the herd each winter when some animals cross from the park into neighboring Montana in search of food.

"This is a new beginning to protect the bison and other wildlife in Indian country," Jimmy St. Goddard, a self-described spiritual leader of the Blackfeet Tribe in Montana, said in a telephone interview from outside the Montana Capitol in Helena.

He was among dozens who gathered to call for an end to the slaughter of Yellowstone buffalo, which are a major attraction for the 3 million people who visit the park. They are the largest purebred herd of wild buffalo in the United States.

The iconic hump-backed animals once roamed by the tens of millions west of the Mississippi until hunting campaigns reduced their numbers to the fewer than 50 that found safe harbor at Yellowstone in the early 20th century.

Under an agreement between the park and the states surrounding Yellowstone – Montana, Wyoming and Idaho – hundreds of straying bison can be killed each year through slaughter and regulated hunting.

The practice has inflamed bison advocates like the Buffalo Field Campaign and some members of tribes in Montana and the Pacific Northwest.

In a sign of tribal dissent surrounding the issue, other members of the same tribes annually exercise treaty rights to hunt bison that migrate to Montana from Yellowstone. St. Goddard's position on bison was not formally sanctioned by the Blackfeet Nation, leaders said.

The number of culled bison so far this year is more than 330, with most loaded on trucks and sent to slaughter. Bison managers are seeking to cull 900 of the animals from a herd estimated at 4,900.

Rick Wallen, lead wildlife biologist for Yellowstone's bison program, said in a statement this week that cutting bison numbers was required to accommodate concerns expressed by surrounding states “that they really didn’t want wild bison outside the national park.”

The culling aims to address fears by Montana ranchers that bison exposed to brucellosis, a disease that can cause animals to abort their young, will infect cattle that graze near the park.

(Reporting by Laura Zuckerman in Salmon, Idaho; Editing by Cynthia Johnston and Peter Cooney)

**Direct Link:** <http://news.yahoo.com/native-americans-gather-montana-protest-slaughter-yellowstone-bison-020927464.html>

## **Voices rise up against racism: Hundreds of protesters rally against injustice in Rapid City**



Hundreds of protesters gather on Tuesday at an anti-racism demonstration outside of the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center.

9 hours ago • [Seth Tupper Journal staff](#)

On one side, privilege.

On the other, pain.

That was the message and the metaphor Tuesday night as hundreds of Native Americans gathered outside the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center in Rapid City.

They crowded against the window-lined wall on the east side of the center's ice arena, bundled up and shivering in the 32-degree weather.

On the other side of the windows, in the ice arena concourse, hockey fans chomping on hot dogs and drinking glasses of beer intermittently stopped and gazed out at the gathering.

What they saw was a throng of people raising up in speech, song, shouting, fist-raising and other signs in a show of solidarity against racism.

They came to condemn what happened at the Jan. 24 Rapid City Rush game, when some fans in a suite reportedly poured beer and harassed a group of youths on a class trip from the American Horse School in Allen — and told them to “go back to the rez.”

A string of speakers at Tuesday night's rally called for justice and said the investigation by local police is taking too long. One speaker claimed that the incident has drawn national attention to Rapid City specifically because it appears to be the first racist attack on children at a public sporting event.

Anger over the fact the harassment was laid upon children, who were being honored for positive behavior in school, was a theme of many of the speeches.

One of the speakers, Chase Iron Eyes, announced plans for a march on Feb. 26 and said it will be part of a sustained effort to keep the pressure on city leaders and police.

But the scope of the evening's rhetoric was broader than that. As a string of Native American leaders took the microphone, their voices projected through a portable speaker, pent-up grievances poured out. They spoke of losing their land generations ago, of suffering from a “dual system of justice” that imprisons too many of their people, of enduring racism and second-class citizenship in a land their ancestors once ruled.

“They've stolen everything we have,” Clyde Bellecourt, one of the rally's organizers, told the crowd, “except our dignity and our pride. They can't take that from us.”

It was one of many remarks that drew shrieks of support from the crowd and approving beats from those seated around a large Native American drum.

The gathering began around 5 p.m. and grew steadily in size, perhaps to beyond 300 people, and lasted until about 6:30. Most of the people were Native Americans, and some came from reservations hundreds of miles away. There were also some whites in the crowd. Especially conspicuous was a group of white Unitarian Universalists who held up a large sign saying it was “standing on the side of love.”



As one white fan clad in a Rush jersey walked past the rally on her way into the hockey game, she uttered words of support to a few Native Americans on the edge of the crowd. "Give 'em hell," she said. "What those idiots did to those kids is unacceptable."

Some rally organizers cooperated with a handful of police officers to keep the crowd on the sidewalk and out of parking-lot traffic. That meant the mass of humanity stretched hundreds of feet along the ice arena's exterior.

The gathering opened and closed with traditional songs and prayer. The time between was filled entirely with speeches, mostly by Native American leaders but also by Rapid City Mayor Sam Kooiker, who asked everyone in the audience to work with city leaders to address racism.

"We have a moral responsibility, whatever color we are, to fight racism whenever and wherever we see it," Kooiker said.

He mentioned today's 10 a.m. public meeting of the city's Human Relations Commission in the third-floor West Conference Room of the City Administration Building, where a representative of the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Relations Service will participate in a discussion about reconciliation.

Some in the crowd were too far away to hear the speakers, but most of them stayed through the last speech anyway despite a cutting wind.

One of the faces in the crowd was Lisa Selwyn, a Yankton Sioux tribal member and Rapid City resident who formerly worked at the civic center. She agreed with a common refrain of the rally, that Rapid City is infected with racism. Last summer, she recalled, she was walking along Mount Rushmore Road with her young son when someone in a passing truck yelled "Go back to the rez, you fat squaw!"

Selwyn said she attended the rally to support better treatment and education of all children.

"I think the problem with racism here is that people are ignorant. People don't understand differences," Selwyn said. "They just see another Indian face, but they don't know who they are as a person. They just see a skin color. That's what I think the underlying thing is."

Some speakers engaged in more heated rhetoric. The Minneapolis-based National Coalition against Racism in Sports and Media kindled the rally earlier in the afternoon with a press conference at the Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn.

"We realize that Rapid City is one of the most racist cities in the country," coalition vice president Henry Boucha told more than 40 press conference attendees. "This is a powder keg ready to happen. We are waiting to see what is going to happen with this investigation."

Boucha is an Ojibwe from Minnesota and a former National Hockey League player. In response to his allegation about Rapid City's "most racist" status, Rapid City Communications Coordinator Darrell Shoemaker supplied the following statement from Mayor Kooiker.

"Improving race relations is an ongoing effort. These efforts in Rapid City have helped produce a polling place at Lakota Homes, a revitalized Human Relations Commission, the printing of the City's legal notices in the Native Sun News and efforts to appoint more Native residents to boards, commissions and committees. These efforts have had the support of a super majority of the City Council and community."

Boucha was joined in leadership of the press conference and rally by Bellecourt, co-founder of both the American Indian Movement and National Coalition against Racism in Sports and Media.

Bellecourt said the rally equated to "confrontation politics" to force justice for the children who were mistreated at the Jan. 24 hockey game.

Bellecourt said AIM made the call that brought the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Relations Service to town. He described the service as a "peacemaker" branch of the agency that facilitates conflict resolution.

He also said activists will seek a DOJ investigation of Rapid City's government and will call for a boycott on South Dakota tourism.

"We're going to bring them to their knees," he said. "That's the only thing they understand ... Ignorance breeds racism, and we're going to give them a good education here."

Tom Poor Bear, vice president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, said race issues aren't limited to Rapid City but span western South Dakota. He referenced several deaths of Native Americans that he said remain unsolved or were never properly investigated.

"We don't want an apology," Poor Bear said. "We don't want free tickets to a hockey game. We want justice."

**Direct Link:** [http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/hundreds-of-native-americans-rally-against-racism-in-rapid-city/article\\_d258a7e0-8042-5dbb-a93b-789e165d65bd.html](http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/hundreds-of-native-americans-rally-against-racism-in-rapid-city/article_d258a7e0-8042-5dbb-a93b-789e165d65bd.html)

## **Ho-Chunk Inc. Becomes Major Shareholder of the Native American Bank**

[ICTMN Staff](#)

2/11/15

Lance Morgan, president and CEO of Ho-Chunk, Inc., said on Monday that the economic development corporation for the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska has become a major shareholder in the Native American Bancorporation Co.

“First and foremost, we saw this as an excellent investment opportunity for Ho-Chunk, Inc.,” Morgan said in a news release, adding “but we also understand that access to capital is a major economic hurdle for tribal communities and truly wanted to be part of the solution.”

The Native American Bank, N.A. (NAB) is headquartered in Denver, Colo., and has a retail branch and loan production office in Montana. The bank specializes in commercial loans to Native American governments and enterprises, as well as home loans to Natives.

Native American Bancorporation Co. was formed in 1988, and in 2001, twenty tribal nations and Alaskan Native Corporations set out with a dream “to create a national bank to serve all Native people, communities, governments and enterprises across the country” and established Native American Bank, N.A. (NAB), its website says. Both the Native American Bancorporation Co. and NAB are certified Community Development Financial Institutions, whose purpose is to promote economic development in areas that are underserved by traditional financial institutions.

The projects NAB has supported include \$5.2 million for a recycling facility in Florida, \$5.5 million for a new hotel in Montana, \$7 million for a new general store in a remote Alaska village and nearly \$8 million for housing projects in South Dakota and North Carolina.

“We have made a concerted effort to source projects that meet the bank’s mission while providing economic diversity and meaningful jobs,” Thomas Ogaard, president and CEO of NAB and the Native American Bancorporation Co. “The capital support provided by Ho-Chunk, Inc. is a valuable resource that allows us to continue these efforts, grow the bank and make a difference in the lives of the people we serve.”

“This is the first and only bank to exclusively serve the financial needs of Indian Country,” said Morgan.

*Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/11/ho-chunk-inc-becomes-major-shareholder-native-american-bank-159157>*

## **Compromise reached in autopsy dispute, but concerns linger in Native American community**

By [Tom Olsen](#) on Feb 11, 2015 at 6:34 p.m.

CARLTON — Nearly three dozen people crowded inside the modest lobby of the Carlton County Attorney's Office on Wednesday morning.

Local tribal leaders and family members of Autumn Martineau, a 24-year-old member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa who was killed in a car crash Tuesday, anxiously awaited news in the dispute over a planned autopsy that family members said would violate their cultural teachings.

Fond du Lac Chairwoman Karen Diver emerged from a closed-door meeting at about 10 a.m., delivering some good news: A compromise had been reached with the medical examiner, and an autopsy was no longer necessary.

"I'm happy that my daughter is coming home," a somber Joy Martineau said moments later. "That is where she belongs, and it's a big relief."

The compromise allows for the St. Louis County Medical Examiner's Office to examine the body and perform an MRI scan, but not use any invasive methods that would alter the body.

It was the second time this week in the Northland that a controversy arose over a planned autopsy.

On Sunday, the medical examiner's office planned to conduct an autopsy on the body of Mushkoob Aubid, a Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe spiritual leader who died following a one-car crash near Cromwell. His body was released to the family Monday following a judge's order and consultation with county attorneys.

In both cases, family members said an autopsy would violate their beliefs, which require that a body remain intact.

The body of Martineau, who was a passenger in a two-vehicle crash at the junction of Interstate 35 and Minnesota Highway 33 in Cloquet, was taken to Hibbing on Tuesday against the family's objections.

"It's been hard going through this," Joy Martineau said. "Not knowing where she was taken, not knowing when we would get her back."

Diver said the end result was satisfying, but called on the counties to improve their relations with Native American families going forward.

"The Mille Lacs Band and Fond du Lac Band are willing to be a resource in those efforts and hold them accountable, but also help them with their learning so we can develop protocols that are respectful of our own traditions and our own religious beliefs," she said.

Carlton County Attorney Thom Pertler said that the cases were the first times he's encountered strong opposition to an autopsy. He agreed to meet with band officials and discuss procedures for working with families who express religious concerns.

"That's what everybody's goal is, to remain sensitive of cultural beliefs," Pertler said. "During our discussions this morning, we did suggest that it was probably a good idea to sit down and have a meeting or a series of meetings."

Carlton County previously had an elected coroner position, but began contracting with St. Louis County Medical Examiner Thomas Uncini for services beginning this year.

Uncini this week defended his demands for autopsies, saying they are standard in car accidents and necessary for keeping accurate medical statistics.

"Nowadays, with the potential for vehicular homicide charges, it becomes really important to document injuries and to do autopsies to prove if the person indeed died from the crash," Uncini told the News Tribune on Tuesday.

Pertler also defended the practice, saying the the medical examiner is entrusted, under statute, to determine whether an autopsy is necessary.

The county attorney also raised concerns about the process used to stop the two autopsies this week. In both cases, tribal attorneys drafted papers and obtained a signature from Sixth Judicial District Judge Robert Macaulay.

"The medical examiner's office was concerned that they weren't given the opportunity to respond to the paperwork that was submitted to court," Pertler said. "The hope or desire was to be given a chance to address the court and explain why an autopsy would've been necessary or beneficial."

Tribal leaders, though, remained critical of the medical examiner's handling of the cases and held firmly to their beliefs that religious freedoms supersede the laws governing autopsies.

Kevin Dupuis, a Fond du Lac council member, said the experience has left lingering concerns for families who practice traditional values.

"No one man or group of people have the right to deny us our right to exist as we are as a people," he said. "No human being has the right to question another person's belief."

**Direct Link:** <http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/news/3676955-compromise-reached-autopsy-dispute-concerns-linger-native-american-community>